# DEISM REVEALED.

## OR, THE

## Attack on CHRISTIANITY

CANDIDLY REVIEWED

In its real MERITS, as they ſtand in the celebrated Writings of

| | |
|---|---|
| Lord HERBERT, | MANDEVILLE, |
| Lord SHAFTESBURY, | DODWELL, |
| HOBBES, | WOOLSTON, |
| TOLAND, | MORGAN, |
| TINDAL, | CHUBB, |
| COLLINS, | And others. |

The SECOND EDITION. With Amendments.

Ἀρχαῖος μὲν ἔν τις λόγος καὶ πάτριός ἐσι πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις, ὡς ἐκ Θεῶ τὰ πάντα καὶ διὰ Θεῶ ἡμῖν συνέστηκεν· ἐδημία δὲ φύσις αὐτὴ καθ' ἑαυτὴν αὐτάρκης ἐφημωθεῖσα τῆς ἐκ τέτε σωτηρίας. Ariſtot. de Mundo.

——Ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἂν διδάξειεν, εἰ μὴ Θεὸς ὑφηγοῖτο.
Plato in Epinom.

In TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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# PREFACE.

READER,

ALTHO', generally ſpeaking, a Preface is deſervedly conſidered as no more than a buttreſs to the front of a tottering building, which, if ſkilfully managed, may aſſume, in ſome meaſure, the air of a portico; yet as, on this occaſion, there are a few preliminary notices which you ought to be appriſed of, give me leave to lay them before you here, at the entrance. If you begin with theſe, and do not, according to the prepoſterous cuſtom of ſome readers, who always make a book the introduction to its preface, defer it till you have read the performance it is prefixed to; it may happen to ſave you the trouble of peruſing the book itſelf: for, to be plain with you, the following Dialogues are neither as to the matter, nor manner, planned on the taſte of the preſent times.

If you read merely for amuſement, this work being, only in ſome places, and chiefly towards the latter end, calculated for that purpoſe; you muſt be, in part, diſappointed. If you are one of thoſe grave and ſolid readers, whom nothing can pleaſe but a cloſe and well-connected chain of cool reaſoning; it will be but an act of juſtice to let you know, in time, that the characters introduced by the preſent work, are ſupported, as is uſual in converſation and debate, with ſome ſtrokes of a lower faculty than that of reaſon. If your end, in reading, is only to confirm you in your own opinions, be adviſed not to meddle with theſe Dialogues; in which the diſputants, on both ſides, do their utmoſt to overturn the principles of their adverſaries. If you do not care to be rouſed from a pleaſing ſlumber over long-indulged opinions, or a yet more favourite courſe of life accommodated to thoſe opinions, ſtop here; for the very foundations of your ſentiments about religion, be they what they will, are, in the following performance, examined with a ſeverity and impartiality not very uſual in writings of this kind. For inſtance; in caſe you are inviolably pre-engaged to the

the religion of your country, the arguments, here urged home in their utmoſt force by its oppoſers, will ſhock you not a little: or, in caſe you are ſettled in Libertine and Deiſtical principles; the perſon, who here aſſaults thoſe principles with the weapons of Revelation, may happen to give you ſome diſturbance.

Was there ever ſo odd a Prefacer! you will ſay, who labours to diſſuade his reader from the peruſal of a Book, written, or at leaſt publiſhed, by himſelf? Be patient, and hear me out. I do not mean to bar up your way to the Book by this Preface, unleſs you are reducible to ſome one or other of the foregoing claſſes: if you are, I, who am at preſent better acquainted with theſe Dialogues than you, know full well, they will neither be pleaſing nor profitable to you. But, provided you are one who honeſtly prefers the truth to all things; and if, in order to get a thorough view of it, you are willing to ſubmit your opinions, pre-conceptions, or principles, to a re-examination; or, in caſe you are as yet under no engagement to any ſet of ſentiments about religious matters; you, and the Book I introduce to you, are well enough quali-

fied to paſs a few hours together; ſo well, indeed, that, I promiſe you, ſuch a converſation will not be altogether diſagreeable or unprofitable to you.

Altho' no one hath a worſe talent at compliments than your humble ſervant, yet I will take it for granted, you have ſat down to read this book, in queſt of truth, and in order to a little information. If I do you juſtice in this, do not wrong yourſelf by turning critic; examine cloſely into the reaſonings, that you may judge of their ſtrength; and weigh the reflections, in order to find out whether they are juſt and uſeful: but as to cenſures on the mere conduct of the work, and its ſtile, conſider them as impertinent, and beſide your purpoſe. If a Phyſician ſhould viſit you in your ſickneſs, you would not, I ſuppoſe, inſtead of liſtening attentively to his directions, fall to making remarks on the impropriety or ruſticity of his expreſſions. This is not ſaid becauſe the Author is in any pain to prevent your criticizing his Book, in caſe you read only to refute. That liberty he hath taken with others, you, and all the world, are moſt heartily welcome to uſe, in its utmoſt extent, with him. Neither do I hereby

hereby intimate the leaſt apprehenſion in him at the effects of that ruffle he may poſſibly excite in your temper: your paſſion will not at all diſcompoſe him, if, upon looking into his performance, you ſhould think fit to ſhew ſome reſentment at ſeeing your principles baffled, or your practices expoſed. He writes for truth with a freedom becoming ſo noble a cauſe, and he laſhes the low diſſembler, who, pretending to do the ſame, hath recourſe to double-dealing, to impoſture, and hypocriſy, with an indignation, felt by every honeſt man at the ſight of a detected thief or ſharper. In caſe, therefore, you ſhould be piqued, keep your chagrin to yourſelf, and be revenged as ſecretly as you can; for, by diſcovering your uneaſineſs, you will but claſs yourſelf with a ſet of men, who make as deſpicable a figure in the eyes of all honeſt and diſcerning perſons, as they do in the cenſures of this writer. He ſees farther into the defects of his own performance than you can do, unleſs you will give as much attention to it as he hath done, which is neither to be ſuppoſed, nor expected. He foreſees you will, on ſome occaſions, be diſſatisfied

with his reaſonings, cloyed with his repetitions, tired with the length of his harangues, diſguſted at the bluntneſs of his ſtile, and perhaps offended at his putting ſo many arguments into the mouth of him who oppoſes your own opinions. As to his reaſoning weakly on ſome occaſions, you ought not to be diſpleaſed with him for it, becauſe he did his beſt. Neither will you, it is hoped, be ſevere on his repetitions, when you find that the defence of Deiſm in one part of his work, and that of Chriſtianity in the other, forced him ſometimes to handle the ſame topic in both; and that he was often obliged to give the ſame anſwer to ſeveral objections, either becauſe they did not admit of any ſo good, or becauſe none ſo good occurred to him. Beſides, you are ſenſible, that, in Dialogue, the ſpeakers cannot ſo properly refer, as in a regular treatiſe, to what was formerly urged, but not granted; and are therefore frequently obliged to recal the ſame arguments, as it always happens, in every extemporary debate. He hath on ſet purpoſe made the ſpeeches ſometimes run out into a greater length than thoſe of *Plato* and *Lucian:* had he done otherwiſe, the

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frequent interruptions and rejoinders muſt, in the midſt of ſo much matter, and ſo many topics, have ſpun out the work to ſuch a prolixity, as ſeemed too great a treſpaſs on your time and patience. You will aſk, Why, then, did he write in Dialogue? He will anſwer, That he choſe that manner of performance for your entertainment; and will thank you, if you do not aſk, Why he wrote at all? As to his giving him, who holds the contrary ſide of the queſtion to yours, leave to ſay ſo much; he hath no other apology to make, but his having taken it for granted, that whoever writes for truth, writes for you; and you know, Sir, truth is not likely to be fairly weighed, when all the arguments are thrown into one ſcale. Thus much I thought proper to ſay to you, in caſe you ſhould look into this book with a deſign to ſnarl.

But as I rather hope you intend to read with a diſpoſition more conformable to that which gave birth to the following Dialogues, I ſhall conſider you only in that view, and ſpeak to you as a ſincere lover of truth; than which, there is nothing you or I have ever heard of, better worth inquiring after, eſpecially in rela-

tion to religion. Nothing, therefore, can be more unpardonable than a neglect, and nothing more abſurd than a wrong management, of this inquiry: yet the bulk of mankind give themſelves little or no trouble about the matter. The faſhion of a man's cloaths, the menage of his horſe, or the making his dog, often coſt him as much money, and more care and pains, than the choice of his principles: yet there are ſome who look for truth with a ſincere and hearty affection, but do it under a byaſs, unperceived and unfelt by themſelves; and therefore, notwithſtanding the goodneſs of their intentions, like perſons whoſe eyes are muffled, go wide of what they ſearch for. Some are afraid their own opinions ſhould, upon a cloſe and candid ſcrutiny, appear to be ill-grounded; and ſo, in conſequence of this unmanly apprehenſion, paſs their days in a ſecret ſcepticiſm, covered with the maſk of bigotry, thro' which they now-and-then warily peep aſkew at the oppoſite opinions and arguments, as children do at fruit they are forbidden to touch; their curioſity being checked by their fears, and their love of truth repreſſed by a greater

greater fondneſs for prejudices, long ago eſpouſed, of which, however, they are a little jealous. Some, on the contrary, do indeed diſpute and read with a ſhew of much freedom, but, withal, under the influence of a ſtrong deſire or wiſh to find their own opinions true; which adds as much weight to weak arguments on their own ſide of the queſtion, as it takes off from ſtrong ones on the other. Laſtly, There are many able controvertiſts, and men of renown in diſputation, who purſue, not truth, but intereſted views; ſuch as the profits ariſing from a very vendible book, or from lucrative principles, which they wed, more for the dowry entailed on them, than for their beauty and merit; or the glory of well-managed debates, of peculiar ſyſtems, and of new and ſurpriſing diſcoveries, calculated for no other purpoſe than to ſet the inventors at the head of new ſects and parties.

From men, thus influenced, nothing is to be hoped for but nibbling, or chicaning. If you, my dear Reader, are of a more ingenuous turn of mind, you will be well pleaſed to look into a performance, wherein if more, on ſome occaſions,

is ſaid on one ſide, than the other, yet juſtice is done to both; inaſmuch as fair and open dealing runs thro' the whole, and little or nothing is omitted, that can be juſtly brought in defence of either.

As for the Deiſts, I muſt obſerve to you, that they do not, by any means, do juſtice to their own cauſe; they do but in part ſupport it with its own genuine arguments. They ſtand miſerably in awe of fines; they are afraid to ſpeak out their principles, leſt they ſhould ſhock or alarm. It is for theſe reaſons, that they are forced to borrow the name and cloak of Chriſtianity, in order to attack it; and dare ſeldom or never rejoin to their anſwerers, leſt they ſhould loſe the benefit of their preſent concealment, from which the greater part of their ſucceſs is hoped for.

On the other hand, our modern Apologiſts for Chriſtianity often defend it on Deiſtical principles; and, beſides, are too apt to give a new model to their own *credenda*; hoping, thereby, to gain ſome advantage to their cauſe; or, at leaſt, to acquire the reputation of having contrived a better ſort of Chriſtianity. Among thoſe of them who ſtick the cloſeſt to the old

Chriſtianity,

Chriſtianity, and argue beſt for it, there are ſome, who, knowing the Libertine turn of the times, are a little afraid, on their ſide, to deal roundly with their adverſaries; and therefore aſſume an affected gentleneſs; ſoftening the ſanctions, lowering the myſteries, and relaxing the ordinances of their religion.

By theſe means, the controverſy is for ever ſhifting, ſo that nothing is brought to an end, or concluſion; and, what is ſtill worſe, the real merits on both ſides are kept out of ſight, being covered under a world of artifice and confuſion, or whiffled away into needleſs debates about matters of little conſequence.

To keep clear of theſe inconveniences, and do juſtice to the controverſy, the writer now before you brings real Deiſm, and real Chriſtianity, into the field, to confront each other: if you are a Deiſt, you will be well pleaſed to ſee your adverſaries held to that religion which Chriſt and his Apoſtles left the world: and if, from what is ſaid in this work, reaſon, without higher aſſiſtance, ſhould appear an inſufficient guide; if men may be not truſted altogether with themſelves; if they cannot be their own inſtructors, their own legiſlators,

lators, their own judges; or if preſent conſiderations only are not of ſufficient weight to render them virtuous; then be juſt to your own reaſon, and bid Deiſm a final farewel. If you are a Chriſtian, you cannot take it amiſs, to ſee the principles of Deiſm truly repreſented, and defended with their own proper arguments; and if myſteries, and poſitive inſtitutions, and the traditionary nature of the vouchers for Chriſtianity, ſhall, on a fair inquiry, appear to refute the ſuppoſition of its Divinity, let it fall to the ground.

Time was, when the inhabitants of theſe countries were forced to be of whatſoever religion other people pleaſed; but it is the peculiar happineſs of the times we live in, that every man may be of what religion he himſelf pleaſes, or of none, in caſe none ſhall pleaſe him. Let not, therefore, this Author, or any other, write with greater freedom, or boldneſs, or regard to truth, than you dare read with. If you ſuſpect your own opinions, this alone is a ſufficient reaſon for your attending cloſely to all that can be ſaid either for or againſt them: if you are fully convinced of their ſoundneſs, you have nothing to fear from the moſt impartial examination

mination of them: if you have been hitherto amuſed with an artful management of this important debate, and confounded with the fight of combatants, ſtealing weapons from each other, to annoy each other, ſo as that you could not diſtinguiſh to whom thoſe weapons did of right belong; it will be ſome ſatisfaction to you to ſee, in theſe Dialogues, each opponent ſtanding on his own ground, fairly covering himſelf with his own ſhield, or ſtrikeing with his own proper ſword. You know, Sir, that, altho' this controverſy may, for a time, be managed, it can never be finally decided, by policy and ſtratagem, but by the ſtrength of fair and open reaſoning.

After all, Sir, I am very far from conceitedly inſinuating, that this Dialogiſt is the only perſon who hath managed the diſpute, I ſpeak of, with candour; or that you may from the performance now in your hands, derive more ſatisfaction than from ſeveral others: for I am as ſenſible, as any man can be, that many, who have handled the ſame topic with the preſent writer, have done it, ſo far as they went, with equal honeſty, and ſuperior ability: but I do inſiſt, that, in general, the chief articles

in debate, between Deiſts and Chriſtians, are not handled in ſo open, or ſo ingenuous a manner, as here; nor kept ſo unembarraſſed with the diſcuſſion of points not neceſſarily connected with the deciſive merits of this important queſtion. Give me leave therefore to advertiſe you, that the preſent performance is intended, by its Author, rather as an introduction to a further, and more perfect courſe of reading, on the reigning controverſy, than as a complete ſyſtem of all that can, or ought to be ſaid thereon.

# CONTENTS
## OF THE
## First VOLUME.

### DIALOGUE the FIRST.

*A Preliminary converſation, from page* 1 *to* 12
*The behaviour poor Clergymen ought to obſerve towards their wealthy neighbours* 2
*On going to church, and other outward ſigns of devotion* 3
*The conduct of the Clergy in giving advice, particularly to men of wealth and ſtation* 3
*How the intereſt of the church is to be ſupported, and how far a Clergyman ought to accommodate himſelf, and his doctrine, to thoſe who lead the world* 4
*The Church's claim to ſupport and aſſiſtance from God* 4
*The Church-lands not the Church—What is the Church—When it is in danger—The embaſſadorſhip of the Clergy—Peculiarity of temper early diſcovered* 5
*Concerning the contempt of wealth and preferment in the Clergy* 6

*What*

*What hinders—What furthers preferment—Content in the Clergy—Advantages of a ſmall fortune—The anxieties attending a great one—Cardinal* Spada's *ſcheme of martyrdom* page 6, 7

*How far zeal and merit contribute to promotion in the Church—Methods of arriving at preferment* 7, 8

*Character of the preſent Bench of Biſhops. Some men prevent their own promotion by uncouth ſtiffneſs of temper—The advantages of temporizing* 8

*Whether ſucceſs in the world is a proof of wiſdom—Whether great wealth can afford any thing above contentment—Whether wealth ill acquired can make a man happy* 9

*Whether it is neceſſary to inſtil principles of any ſort into youth—Whether youth ought not to be inſtructed in the internal ſciences, as well as thoſe that are external* 9, 10

*What ſort of principles may, or may not, be inſtilled by education* 10, 11

*The efficacy of a pliant behaviour in making a man's fortune* 11, 12

*The ſermon of a country Parſon againſt Deiſm gives occaſion to the following Dialogues* 12

*Whether it is proper in ſuch diſcourſes to animadvert on what paſſes in private converſation, or is carried about by report—The inſignificance of ſermons* 12, 13, 14

*The heads of the Parſon's ſermon repeated, in order to be examined.*

1. *The*

1. *The evidence of poſſible facts, ſaid to have been done in former ages, being matter of faith.*

2. *Query whether the diſbelief of ſuch facts is not matter of faith?*

3. *Query whether he who does not believe in Scriptural facts, is not as properly a believer, as he who does?* page 14

*Firſt head agreed to—and the aſſent, given to credibility, examined—Whether the evidence of things not ſeen may be as ſafely depended on, as that of ſenſe or demonſtration* 15, 16

*The effects of faith on commerce, on the ſtate, on the diſtribution of juſtice, &c.* 17

*Errors ariſing from too great, or too little, dependence on credibility* 17, 18

*Second head of the ſermon examined* 19

*Third head examined—No teſtimony can procure aſſent to the relation of impoſſible facts—Whether certain Scriptural facts were not impoſſible, particularly the reſurrection of Chriſt* 20

*Whether a reunion of ſoul and body is poſſible according to the laws of nature—If poſſible, by what power it may be effected—Concerning the perfection or imperfection of God's works, particularly the moral part* 20, 21

*From whence the irregularities and defects in the moral world ariſe—Whether to remedy theſe defects be an object worthy of God's goodneſs—Whether God's ſuſpenſion or reverſal of the laws of nature be natural* 21, 22

*Whe-*

*Whether at Chriſt's coming a reformation was neceſſary—The opinion of the* Gentiles *and* Jews *concerning it—How this reformation might be effected* page 22
*Whether the reſurrection is probable* 23, 24
*Whether the faith of a Chriſtian, or a Libertine, has the beſt foundation in hiſtory* 24, 25
*Concerning the deſtruction of records and memorials relating to the Chriſtian religion* 25
*Whether Chriſtianity was introduced into the world in an ignorant age* 26
*Whether the Chriſtian religion was propagated in an obſcure manner—Whether it eſcaped the notice of perſons in power* 27
*Concerning the foundation of a Deiſt's faith* 27, 28
*Concerning the nature of a Chriſtian's faith—Whether it is divine* 28, 29
*Whether the operations of the Holy Ghoſt are any proof, that the faith of a Chriſtian is divine—The difference between an hiſtorical and a ſaving faith—From whence the latter ariſes* 29, 30
*Whether the Grace of God is reſiſtible—Whether actions proceeding from thence are rewardable* 30
*Whether ſufficient hiſtorical evidence can be reſiſted—How far men have their faith in their own power—Concerning giving and withholding aſſent, as to articles of faith* 31, 32
*Concerning Deiſts concealing their deſigns—Their reaſons for doing ſo hitherto* 32, 33

*And for their being now more open in declaring their principles* page 34
*The Deiſtical Creed propoſed as a baſis to the following debates* 34, 35
*A panegyric thereon* 35, 36

## DIALOGUE the SECOND.

*THE debate on the firſt article of the Deiſtical Creed opened—What the light of nature conſiſts in—Definitions of ſentiment and reaſon—Whether there is properly a law of nature* 40, 41
*Why the inſtincts of brutes are not laws—What renders the inſtincts of man moral—Whether all men have the ſame law of nature* 41, 42
*A definition of a law—Whether the dictates of reaſon are ſupported by ſufficient authority to make them laws—Concerning the ſanctions of the law of nature—Whether a man has a court of conſcience in his own breaſt* 43, 44
*Concerning the juſtice of the puniſhments inflicted by the law of nature* 44
*Whether one faculty in a man can be a lawgiver to another—Whether duty can ariſe out of, and terminate in, the ſame perſon—What authority the law of nature muſt have, in caſe it is perfect* 45
*Whether a ſociety can ſubſiſt, if its members be not ſubject to a law, previous to thoſe of ſociety* 46

*The qualifications of the ſupreme Magiſtrate—The ill effects of folly or partiality in him* page 46, 47

*The neceſſity of wiſdom, juſtice, and power, in the ſupreme Magiſtrate—The ill conſequences of inferior magiſtrates not believing him to be inveſted with ſuch perfections* 47, 48, 49

*Concerning the neceſſity of teſtimonies on tryals* 49

*What gives weight to ſuch teſtimonies—Who is the ſupreme Magiſtrate—Three obſervations on the ſame ſubject* 49, 50

1. *Obſervation. That the qualities of the ſupreme Magiſtrate may be expected in all the under-magiſtrates and ſubjects.*

2. *Concerning the time and manner, in which the ſupreme Magiſtrate is to exert his judicial authority.*

3. *The ſupreme Magiſtrate cannot govern by deceit or impoſture* 50, 51

*Whether nature does not furniſh us with a juſt idea of God, and all our duties* 51, 52

*Whether the idea of God revealed to* Adam *might be tranſmitted to poſterity* 53

*Whether the idea of God is innate; and what would be the conſequences of it, if it were—Whether man, created in full maturity of mind and body, could diſtinguiſh poiſonous from nutritious fruits, or a plain from a precipice* 53, 54

*Whether God taught* Adam *all neceſſary points of knowlege* 54

*Whe-*

*Whether experience is a ſufficient inſtructor—Whether actions are moral to a perſon unacquainted with the law of God* page 55

*Whether a man is under a moral obligation to obey the propenſities and averſions of his nature, and what would be the conſequences, if he was* 56

*Whether reaſon cannot direct the paſſions, and enforce obedience with ſufficient authority* 56, 57

*From whence the idea of God is acquired* 57

*Whether the idea of God ariſes naturally in the mind as ſoon as a perſon begins to be capable of duty and obligation* 58, 59

*Whether the innate idea of God ought to be ſtrong and evident* 60

*Whether the being of a God was ever denied by any ſects of philoſophers—What perſons died martyrs to Atheiſm. The difference between the idea of God, and thoſe of ſenſible objects* 60, 61

*Whether perſons born deaf and blind ever diſcovered any knowlege of God—If a Spirit can be the object of ſenſe* 61

*Concerning the proof of a Deity drawn from the works of Creation—Whether a juſt and adequate idea of God may be collected from thence* 61, 62

*Concerning natural good and evil* 62, 63, 64

*A definition of reaſon—Its operations—Whether we can have any immediate and proper idea of ſpirit—Concerning the ſource of ideas* 64, 65

*How far unaſſiſted reaſon is capable of forming an idea of God—How we ought to form our notions of God* page 65, 66
*How far the mind and body ſtand in need of inſtruction and culture* 66, 67
*Whether a man may be taught to reaſon* 68
*Three definitions of reaſon, by* Hobbes, Cumberland, *and* Tindal, *with ſome obſervations on them* 68, 69, 70
*Concerning the operations of reaſon — Why one man can reaſon better than another* 70, 71
*How the ſoul will operate when diveſted of material organs—How we are to apprehend wiſdom and juſtice in God—How they differ from wiſdom and juſtice in man* 72, 73
*What notion we can have of God, or his attributes—How the ſoul after death may be ſuppoſed to retain impreſſions of its former virtues and vices* 73
*How knowlege is to be acquired and propagated —Whether a right idea of God can be eaſily found out, and in a ſhort time propagated over all the world—Some inſtances relative to this point* 74, 75, 76
*Concerning the theology of the* Pagans *as related by their own writers, with an account of their various modes of worſhip* 76—81
*Some obſervations on the characters of* Lycurgus, Timoleon, Cicero, Cato Uticenſis, Brutus, *and* Germanicus 82, 83
*An account of the enormities committed by the thirty tyrants at* Athens, *and ſome of the* Roman *emperors* 83, 84

# CONTENTS.

*Concerning the cauſe of the ſtrict virtue of the old* Romans—*The difference between the Emperors before and after* Conſtantine's *time* page 84, 85
*Some obſervations on the principles and conduct of the Heathen Philoſophers* 86—89
*How God communicated the knowlege of himſelf to mankind* 90

## DIALOGUE the THIRD.

*Whether the dictates of nature are laws, and carry their own obligation with them* 93, 94, 95
*Concerning the oppoſition of principles in different nations, with ſome inſtances* 96, 97
*Whether there could be ſuch different opinions about matters of moment, if the fitneſſes of things were ſelf-evident, or clearly deducible* 97, 98
*From whence moral duties ariſe* 98
*From whence* Socrates *and* Plato *acquired their knowlege—The opinion of the latter concerning God and virtue* 99, 100
*Why* Greece *excelled* Scythia *in learning* 101
*Whether* Socrates *and* Plato *were ſceptics in religion* 102
*In what the beauty and deformity of actions conſiſt* 103, 104
*What would be the conſequence in caſe the ſenſe of moral beauty and deformity were as evident and irreſiſtible, as ſenſations of bodily pleaſures*

*ſures and pains; or whence the idea of beauty is annexed to ſome actions, and deformity to others* page 104, 105

*Concerning the reality of a moral ſenſe* 105—111

*Concerning the rewards and puniſhments being annexed to the law of nature—Whether they proceed intirely from nature, and are ſufficient to enforce the law to which they are annexed* 111—114

*Whether human nature is in the ſtate God made it* 114—118

*Concerning the powers of reaſon to direct the conſcience, and to affix its approbation and diſlike, to proper objects* 118—122

*What ally reaſon ought to call to her aſſiſtance when the paſſions become too powerful for her* 122

*Whether the complacency attending good actions, and the remorſe attending bad ones, are ſufficient to excite mankind to the former, and deter them from the latter* 123, 124

*Whether the rewards and puniſhments of the Chriſtian law take away freedom of action* 125

*Whether human laws, and even ſociety, would not be unneceſſary, if the law of nature was ſufficiently clear and cogent—What induces men to enter into ſocieties—Whether the laws of nature are ſufficient to ſupport them—How far the Chriſtian law tends to preſerve ſociety* 125—129

*What are the real ſanctions of Deiſm — Whether they are eaſily diſcovered*—Tindal's *opinion*

*nion concerning future punishments* page 129
—132
*Whether the morality of this world is distinct from that of the next—Whether actions done in this life are to be rewarded or punished in the next—Whether this opinion is reasonable—Whether it is necessary, that great rewards and punishments should be provided in another life, and that they should be clearly notified to us in this* 132, 133
Shaftesbury's *opinion concerning rewards and punishments attending virtue and vice—What conclusion would follow from this doctrine, in case it was true* 133, 134
*Whether the immortality of the soul is discoverable by the mere light of nature*—St. Evremont's *opinion thereon* 135
*What is the most natural argument for the immortality of the soul—What this argument is founded on—Whether the opinion, that virtue fully rewards, and vice fully punishes itself in this world, would destroy this argument—Why the immortality of the soul was so generally believed* 136, 137
*The opinions of some Philosophers concerning the immortality of the soul* 137, 138
*Whether a simple uncompounded substance can be annihilated—Whether the dread of annihilation is an argument for the immortality of the soul* 138, 139, 140
*The arguments of* Plato *and* Cicero *for a future state—Why they did not deduce it from the justice of God* 140—143

*Whether future rewards and punishments can be inferred from the belief of the immortality of the soul alone* page 143, 144

*The opinions of* Cicero, *and the poets, concerning future rewards and punishments*—Plato's *opinion thereon, and how he acquired it* 144, 145, 146

*Whether conscience is a sufficient rule of duty*—*A definition of conscience*—*Whether there can be conscience without religion* 146, 147, 148

*A recapitulation of the controversy concerning the sufficiency of reason, with the opinions of several of the Philosophers thereon* — *From whence the* Greeks *had their knowlege of theology and morality* 149, 150

*Some texts of Scripture alleged to prove the universality, clearness, and force of the law of nature; first text, in the second chapter of the epistle to the* Romans. *The purport of this text examined*—*What is the law, and who are the Gentiles, here mentioned* 151—156

*Second text, in the first chapter of the epistle to the* Romans, *whether it may be inferred from thence, that all mankind can easily arrive at a right notion of God, by contemplating the works of creation*— *If they may, are not all the Heathen in a state of damnation?* 157, 158

*Whether this text admits of another interpretation, and what is the true one* 159—163

*Third text, in the tenth chapter of the* Acts— *Whether it can be inferred from thence, that all*

*all mankind may, without inſtruction, know and ſerve God—The caſe of* Cornelius *conſidered, with an explanation of the text* page 164, 165

*Two other texts on the ſame ſubject conſidered and explained* 165, 166

*Concerning the neceſſity of Divine revelation* 167

*Whether this neceſſity proceeds, or may be concluded, from the attributes of God—In what it conſiſts* 168, 169

*Various opinions of heathen Philoſophers concerning the neceſſity of Divine aſſiſtance, particularly in order to the knowlege of true religion* 169, 170

*Concerning certain articles of religion, that cannot poſſibly be known without revelation; and concerning the ſalvation of thoſe, to whom no revelation hath been made* 170, 171

*Whether natural religion hath any neceſſary dependence on revelation, and that part of Chriſtianity, which is myſterious and ſupernatural* 172

*What is meant by Divine revelation* 173

*Whether man ſtands in need of Divine aſſiſtance in reſpect to his will, as well as in reſpect to his underſtanding* 174

*Whether he can be rewarded, who is good only thro' the grace of God* 174

## DIALOGUE the FOURTH.

*IN a ſolid and ingenuous mind a ſtruggle is felt in the change of very important opinions; not ſo in the mind of a bigot, who never changes his opinions, nor in that of a fickle perſon, who changes at random, and without care* page 177

*If the light of nature were the only means of acquiring religion, it would be very clear and univerſal* 178

*Whether unaſſiſted reaſon, or philoſophy, or* Pagan *theology, are ſufficient inſtructors for one who would know the true religion* 178, 179

*Whether modern philoſophy is better fitted to anſwer this end, than the antient* 179, 180

*Whether a man is to look only inward, in order to the knowlege of himſelf and religion* 180, 181

*Whether his looking into himſelf is either practicable or uſeful, without experience and converſation with the world* 181, 182

*If a man find, that, with all his endeavours, he cannot govern himſelf, where he is to apply for aid* 182, 183

*What would be the effects of faith in the wiſdom and juſtice of God* 184, 185

*Whether the ſame effects may not be hoped for on other principles* 185

*What can procure order and obedience in a mind torn, and thrown into confuſion, by outrageous paſſions* page 185
*Exemplified by the caſe of an iſland, inhabited by the moſt wicked perſons only, whom hiſtory makes us acquainted with* 186
*A deſcant on this exemplification* 186, 187
*Whether that knowlege of religion, which ſeems the mere effect of inſtruction, flows not wholly from nature* 188
*What is the ſtrongeſt inſtinct or principle in the nature of man; and how it is that man is to be governed by this inſtinct* 189, 190
*How the love of God, of man, and of virtue, may be produced by the fear of God* 191, 192
*Whether the love of God be not the ſureſt and ſtrongeſt principle, on which benevolence, and every other virtue, can be founded* 192, 193, 194
*Whether ſelf-love is not at firſt the only ſource of love towards mankind* 194—197
*Whether ſelf-love is inconſiſtent with virtue and heroiſm* 197, 198, 199
*That nothing can contribute more to our obeying the law of God, than the knowlege of our chief good; and that the antient Philoſophers were infinitely at a loſs to aſcertain the chief good* 199
*The chief good of Deiſm* 200
*Examined* 201, 202, 203
*The* ſummum bonum *of Chriſtianity* 203
*Examined* 204—207
*Inlarged on* 207, 208, 209

*That it concerns us as much to know the chief evil, as the chief good* page 209
*What the chief evil of Deiſm is. What that of Chriſtianity is* 210
*The latter objected to; 1ſt, from its impoſſibility; 2dly, from its injuſtice and diſproportion, and whereto the puniſhment of ſin ought to be proportioned* 211, 212, 213
*The chief evil ſuggeſted by Chriſtianity; objected to, 3dly, from its compulſiveneſs* 213
*Concerning moral freedom of choice — Whether it ariſes only from ignorance* 214, 215, 216
*The objection from injuſtice reſumed, and further canvaſſed* 217, 218, 219
*Several anſwers propoſed to this objection* 220
*Whether ſelf-love can be the baſis of virtue* 220 —223
*Objection to the chief evil threatened by Chriſtianity, drawn from the goodneſs of God* 223, 224
*Diſcuſſed* 224, 225, 226
*Whether this evil itſelf, or the notification of it, is highly expedient to the reformation and virtue of mankind* 226, 227
*Whether the law of nature is eternal, and a law to God; and whether he can on any occaſion diſpenſe with it* 229, 230
*Whether God could have made the world otherwiſe than it is, ſo as that other duties muſt have reſulted from another ſyſtem of things* 230, 231

*Whether*

*Whether God created all things by a plan or archetype neceſſarily exiſting from all eternity, or whether he contrived every thing as he pleaſed* page 232, 233
*Whether we ought to believe, that God created the very reaſons of things; and whether, if we do, it will not follow, that we muſt believe God to be an arbitrary, and poſſibly a changeable, being* 233, 234
*Whether every idea in the definition of a law does not prove, that there can be no law to bind the actions of God* 235
*How we ought to ſpeak of God in relation to law; and what are the abuſe and detortion of the word law* 236, 237
*Whether the Deiſtical law of nature, if allowed to include the rewards and puniſhments of futurity, will damn all mankind* 237
*This queſtion diſcuſſed* 237—249
*Whether the ſalvation of mankind is better provided for upon the Chriſtian ſyſtem; where of an atonement* 249
*Firſt objection to an atonement propoſed and conſidered* 249, 250
*A paſſage from* Ezekiel *brought to ſupport the objection* 251
*Second objection* 252
*Third objection* 252
*Fourth objection* 253, 254, 255
*Fifth objection* 255
*Sixth objection* 256
*Seventh objection* 256

*Eighth objection* page 257
*Ninth objection* 258, 259
*Texts of Scripture cited under the last objection* 260—263

*End of the Contents to* VOL. I.

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CON-

# CONTENTS

OF THE

# Second VOLUME.

## DIALOGUE the FIFTH.

*WHether any man can be ſure a revelation hath been made to him—Of dreams, viſions, &c.* page 2

*Concerning the poſſibility and evidence of preternatural inlets to knowlege* 3

*Whether an inſpired perſon can give any evidence of his inſpiration to others, and what* 3

*Whether miracles can prove a revelation to be divine—Of natural and ſupernatural magic—Of enthuſiaſtic faith* 4

*Whether evil ſpirits can heal the ſick, raiſe the dead, &c. and whether they would perform ſuch wonders, if they could, in order to a good end* 4, 5

*Whether there is any connexion between a doctrine and a miracle, by which the one may become a proof of the other; and whether he who works a miracle, being free, may not apply it to the proof of any doctrine he pleaſes* 5, 6

*Whether prophecies can be a proof of a miſſion from God* page 7, 8
*Concerning the obſcurity of prophecies* 9
*Whether miracles or prophecies can evidence a Divine miſſion or inſpiration to thoſe who never ſaw the former performed, nor the latter fulfilled* 9
*Concerning the force and effect of report for this purpoſe* 10, 11
*Of martyrdom* 12
*Of the atteſtation of enemies* 12, 13
*Concerning the power and wiſdom of thoſe who oppoſed, and the weakneſs and ignorance of thoſe who vouched for Chriſtianity* 14
*The improbability of facts oppoſed to the credibility of witneſſes* 15
*This oppoſition applied to Chriſt's reſurrection, and conſidered* 16
*Whether any thing can render a miracle probable* 17
*An inſtance brought to prove, that a rational conviction may be founded on report, againſt the common courſe of experience, concerning a fact wholly improbable in itſelf* 18
*Whether experience may not, in ſome meaſure, fall in with the vouchers for miracles* 19
*Whether, if in any caſe experience be inſufficient to counterbalance report, it doth not, in ſuch caſe, proportionably deſtroy the credibility of report* 19, 20
*What kind of intereſt it was which the witneſſes for Chriſtianity propoſed to themſelves in vouching for it—And whether the teſtimony of ſuch, as*

*as from its moſt zealous oppoſers became its moſt zealous aſſertors, is not to be added to the teſtimony of enemies in its favour* page 20, 21

*Whether, allowing the reaſonableneſs of their faith, who received the immediate teſtimony of ſuch as ſaw a miracle performed, they, to whom this teſtimony is conveyed by a long chain of tradition, can have ſufficient reaſon for believing* 22

*How far, and in what ſenſe, the written records of Chriſtian hiſtory may be vouched for by thoſe thro' whoſe hands they have come down to us; where of ſpurious goſpels, epiſtles,* &c. 23

*Of the canon of the two teſtaments* 24, 25

*Whether the whole New Teſtament might not have been forged in the ſecond, or a later century* 26

*Whether, altho' the whole could not have been forged, it might not have been ſo corrupted, as to make it an inſufficient record for our faith to rely on* 27

*The diſputes of the primitive Chriſtians urged as an argument for the ſuppoſition of ſuch corruption* 27, 28

*The integrity and martyrdom of the primitive fathers alleged to the contrary* 28, 29

*The diſputes of the primitive Chriſtians urged to the contrary* 29

*Whether the Scriptures might not have been materially corrupted in the ages of ignorance and monkery* 30, 31

*Whe-*

*Whether the preſent is not the moſt convenient age of the Church, for corrupting the Scriptures, and whether they can be corrupted at preſent* page 31, 32

*Whether it is enough to object, that the Scriptures might have been materially corrupted; and whether the Deiſts can with reaſon be obliged to prove, that they were actually ſo corrupted* 33, 34

*Concerning various readings; whether they deſtroy the authority of Scripture; or whether they do not prove it genuine* 34, 35

*Whether the evidence for facts recorded in Scriptural hiſtory, is equal to the evidence for facts recorded in profane hiſtory* 36

*Whether the Scriptures carry their evidence any farther than to ſuch as are learned in the dead languages; and whether they are capable of being ſo tranſlated, as to raiſe a rational conviction, and be a ſufficient rule of faith and practice among the illiterate* 37—40

*Whether juſtice can be done in a tranſlation to figurative performances* 40, 41

*Of differences and diſputes among thoſe who write commentaries on the Scriptures; and whether ſuch differences are an objection to the Scriptures* 42, 43

*Whether the figures, parables, myſteries, &c. of the Scriptures, render them unintelligible* 44

*Whether the faith of the common people does not depend abſolutely on their Clergy, and by no means on any certainty they can have, that the*

*the Scriptures are the word of God, or that they have been kept uncorrupted* page 45, 46
*Whether they have any others but the Clergy, to depend on for theſe matters* 46, 47
*Whether, at beſt, they can found their faith on any thing elſe, than the authority and example of others, either Laymen or Clergymen* 48
*Another foundation for their faith conſidered* 49
*Other internal foundations conſidered* 50
*Whether it requires as many arguments to produce faith in them, as in thoſe who have more temptations to infidelity* 51, 52
*Whether the poorer ſort are not, by the nature of things, obliged to depend on the knowlege of others better educated, in other matters of the greateſt importance, as well as in reſpect to religion— What duties the knowing, as ſuch, owe to the ignorant* 52, 53, 54
*Whether the people, left to themſelves, would be better verſed in natural, than revealed religion* 55
*Whether thoſe, who have not previouſly a right idea of God, can judge whether any pretended revelation is worthy of him* 56, 57

## DIALOGUE the SIXTH.

*TWO ſorts of fitneſſes to be expected in the right religion,*
*The firſt relating to him who gives it.*
*The ſecond to them who are to receive it.*
*God needs neither honour nor obedience from his creatures,*

*creatures, and governs them only for their good* page 59

*Whether poſitive injunctions are a contradiction to the foregoing doctrine—Whether eternal puniſhments are not alſo an objection to the ſame* 60, 61

*What we are to think of anger, vengeance, &c. as attributed to God in Scripture* 62

*What kind, or degree, of puniſhments and rewards may be ſufficient for the government of God's kingdom* 63

*Whether all puniſhment ought to be inflicted for the reformation of the delinquent, as well as for preventing the delinquency of others* 63, 64

*Of poſitive precepts, whether they are uſeleſs in themſelves, and argue tyranny in the impoſer* 65

*Whether ſecondary laws may be applied in aid of the primary; and whether they may be uſeful to thoſe who do not ſee into the nature of their operation* 66

*A detail of the poſitive duties of Chriſtianity* 66, 67

*Whether ſuch duties, if uſeful, may not be better left to human contrivance, than added to the law of nature by Divine authority* 68

*The uſefulneſs of poſitive duties argued for from the miſchiefs that might be expected, in caſe they were laid aſide* 69

*And from the recourſe had to them in other matters, as well as in thoſe of religion* 70, 71

*Whether the wiſdom of eſtabliſhing any thing as a duty by authority, does not depend on its real uſefulneſs, whether the benefit derived from it be natural or inſtitutional* page 71, 72

*God an abſolute, but not in the common acceptation of the word, an arbitrary being* 72, 73

*The ſubject of myſteries entered on—It is not to be ſuppoſed that God ſhould require of man the belief of an abſurd, a contradictory, or an uſeleſs propoſition* 74

*God can never make our ſalvation depend on a faith oppoſite to knowlege — Whether it is a contradiction in terms to reveal a myſtery ſo as to leave it ſtill a myſtery* 75, 76

*The Incarnation of Chriſt, and the Trinity, propoſed to be examined* 76

*An objection to the Incarnation from the omnipreſence of God* 76, 77

*That in the preſent diſpute, about the two myſteries mentioned, we are not concerned to define the word myſtery in general, nor with an eye to any other ſenſe than what relates to them* 78

*The word, thus reſtrained, is defined—And this definition applied to the text,* Great is *the* myſtery of Godlineſs, *&c.* 78, 79

*Debate about the meaning of that paſſage* 79

*Continued* 80

*An argument for the Incarnation drawn from the omnipotence of God—A parallel caſe* 81, 82

*Whether*

*Whether God can ſo unite the human to the Divine nature as to make but one perſon of both* page 82
*The Incarnation of a Divine being familiar to the Heathens* 83
*Reaſon did not refute it among them* 83, 84
*Whether the Incarnation of the Divine nature is an uſeleſs article of faith, or whether it is neceſſary to the belief of an atonement, and that to the hope of ſalvation* 84
*Whether this doctrine hath an uſeful and moral tendency, or not* 84, 85, 86
*An objection to the doctrine of the Trinity from the unity of God* 87
*The objection conſidered, and the doctrine analogically defended* 87, 88
*Another objection drawn from God's omnipreſence* 88, 89
*Whether this can be anſwered by the conſideration of his incomprehenſibility* 89
*Or by the inconceivableneſs of other inferior things* 90, 91
*Whether ſuch anſwers are to be admitted, ſince we know the myſteries of inferior things by our ſenſes and experience, whereas we receive the doctrine of the Trinity from report only* 91
*The doctrine of the Trinity maintained to be contradictory—This anſwered analogically* 91, 92
*Whether the doctrine contains a contradiction in terms—Whether the terms are ſcriptural* 92, 93

Other

*Other myſteries concerning God, which reaſon muſt receive, and yet can never account for— Whether any argument for receiving the doctrine of the Trinity can be drawn from thence* 93, 94, 95

*An objection to the Incarnation and Trinity drawn from the dignity of the Divine nature; an anſwer given to it from the conſideration of the Divine goodneſs and humility* 95

*Whether, ſince we can neither comprehend ourſelves, nor any thing elſe, we can expect to comprehend God* 96

*That God hath given us only ſuch inlets and faculties for the acquiſition of knowlege, as are commenſurate to our wants* 96, 97

*Whether the belief of a Trinity in God hath any relation to our wants* 97

*Whether the doctrine of the Trinity is eſſential the Chriſtian religion* 97, 98

*Texts of Scripture brought to prove the Divinity of Chriſt, conſidered* 99—102

*Texts to prove the Divinity of the Holy Ghoſt, conſidered* 102, 103, 104

*The unity of the Firſt and Second Perſons in the Trinity debated by texts of Scripture* 105

*As alſo that of the Holy Ghoſt with both, and of the Three Perſons with one another* 106, 107

*Wherein conſiſts the great difficulty of receiving the doctrine of the Trinity; and whether, on account of that difficulty, the doctrine is to be rejected* 108

*The myſteries of natural religion urged as a reaſon for admitting thoſe of revelation* page 109, 110
*The myſteries of natural philoſophy applied to the ſame purpoſe* 110, 111, 112

## DIALOGUE the SEVENTH.

*WHether the diſputes and diviſions among Chriſtians are not a ſufficient objection to their religion; and whether they do not ariſe from the obſcurity of revelation* 115, 116
*Illuſtrated by inſtances of diſputed doctrines* 116
*Whether the diſputes among Chriſtians do not ariſe from their own vanity, and other paſſions, and whether they are not contrary to that charity ſo much recommended by Scripture* 117
*Of a perſecuting zeal, and whence it ariſes* 117, 118
*Whether Chriſtianity hath excited, or ſuffered by, this ſpecies of zeal* 118, 119
*The diviſions among Chriſtians made it extremely difficult for any one to become a convert to Chriſtianity, or for one already a Chriſtian, to chuſe the right profeſſion* 119, 120
*This objection canvaſſed* 121, 122, 123
*Whether men left to the light of nature do not differ as widely and as warmly about religion, as Chriſtians do* 123, 124, 125
*Whether religious differences are of any uſe to the world* 125, 126, 127

*Whether*

*Whether the Chriſtian ſanctions do not tend to deſtroy the nature of virtue, by ſubſtituting, in the place of it, a mercenary obedience* 128
*Whether the ſanctions of Deiſm are not liable to the ſame objection* 129
*Whether the Chriſtian ſanctions compel, and whether they are not, however, of greater force than thoſe of Deiſm* 130
*The true and right idea of human freedom ſtated and recommended* 131, 132
*Whether when freedom is deſtroyed by vice, it can be recovered by experience* 133, 134
*Whether, in order to a free-choice of religious principles, a man ought firſt to become an Atheiſt* 135
*Concerning* courage *in thinking* 136
*Religion compared to phyſic* 136, 137
*The difference between freedom and licentiouſneſs* 137, 138
*Concerning the late introduction of Chriſtianity, as an objection to its truth* 138
*What is neceſſary to make this a good objection* 138, 139
*Whether God actually hath put all men on a level in reſpect to the opportunities of acquiring religious knowlege, or is obliged to do it* 140, 141
*From what topic the neceſſity of a revelation is argued for* 141
*Whether, if a revelation is neceſſary, it ought not to have been made to* Adam 141, 142

*Whether,*

*Whether, if it had, it could not have been preſerved pure, and propagated from that age, as well as any other* page 142, 143
*Whether, as mankind degenerated gradually, they ſtood at firſt in as great need of a revelation as they did in later ages* 144
*Whether Chriſtianity was in part revealed to* Adam ; *and whether other revelations, prior to the Chriſtian, were not made* 144, 145
*How long the knowlege and worſhip of one God was preſerved by the antients* 145, 146
*Whether any preparation was made for the introduction of Chriſtianity ; and how the* Jews *were made ſubſervient to that purpoſe, particularly among the Gentiles* 147, 148, 149, 150
*Whether the Philoſophers and Conquerors, that preceded the Chriſtian æra, were made by Providence to promote the ſame end* 150, 151
*Whether the religion of nature, as being univerſal, does not better ſerve the purpoſes of mankind, than that of Chriſt, which is more confined* 151, 152, 153
*Whether revelation was not intended to accompany refinement and luxury, and whether the moſt ignorant nations ſtand not in the leaſt need of it* 153
*This conſidered* 154
*Whether Deiſm, or Chriſtianity, tends moſt to the reprobation of mankind ; and whether, if none can be ſaved but Chriſtians, it is impoſſible*

*for God himſelf to provide for the ſalvation of ſuch as live and die without hearing of Chriſt* page 154, 155, 156
*We are not to pry into the ſecrets of Providence, nor to ſet bounds to his wiſdom, goodneſs, and power, other than he hath declared to us* 157, 158
*An objection to Chriſtianity drawn from the ill lives of its profeſſors* 158, 159
*Conſidered* 159, 160
*The objection more particularly urged from the ill lives of the Clergy* 161
*From their luxury* 161
*From their ambition, and diſregard to their oaths* 162
*From their time-ſerving and prevarication* 164
*From their love of the world* 164
*From their partiality* 165
*From their bigotry, which is charged on their education* 166
*How far the Clergy may be defended* 167
*Againſt the charge of diſregard to their oaths* 168
*Againſt the objections made to their education* 168, 169
*Againſt the charge of partiality* 169, 170
*How far they ought to be given up* 170, 171
*That the Clergy ought to attend to what is ſaid of them by their enemies* 171.
*Their too general indifference for the Cauſe of Chriſtianity.* 172, 173

*Whether*

*Whether the Clergy be all juſtly liable to the cenſures thrown on their order* page 174
*How far they are culpable in converſing too much among themſelves, and ſcreening one another* 174, 175
*What ſort of Clergymen are moſt liked by the adverſaries of Chriſtianity, and their character in reſpect to ſincerity* 175
*How it comes to paſs that bad men get into the Miniſtry; the effects of their admiſſion* 176
*Whether the Clergy are ſtill as much better than the Laity, as ever they were* 176
*What ought to be the conduct of thoſe, who judge of religion by the lives of its preachers* 177, 178
*Whether the Clergy of the Church of* England *are more expoſed to cenſure, than thoſe of any other Church* 179
*Concerning want of diſcipline* 179, 180
*What ſort of a Layman an ordinary Clergyman would make, were he to live after the change, as he did before it* 180, 181
*What ought to be the qualifications of a good Clergyman* 181, 182
*How far the vices of the Clergy may be allowed to call Chriſtianity in queſtion* 182, 183
*Whether the truth of Chriſtianity ought not to be examined into by the ſame rules with other branches of knowlege* 183, 184
*The origin of Deiſm* 184
*Whether great ſanctity is to be expected in any man merely for his going into orders* 185, 186

*Whether*

*Whether the general tenor of a man's actions always ſhews his principles* page 186, 187
*Chriſtianity ſuſpected, becauſe the Clergy, who know more of it than the Laity generally do, do not live agreeable to its precepts* 187
*Whether, if a bad Clergyman proves Chriſtianity to be an impoſture, a good Clergyman ought to prove it to be a true religion* 188, 189
*In what caſe it would be better that the Clergy were leſs reſpected than they are* 189
*Whether the bad lives of the Clergy furniſh an argument for the truth of Chriſtianity* 190, 191
*Whether all religions require teachers, in order to their being known* 191, 192
*Chriſtianity certainly does* 192, 193
*Whether Libertiniſm itſelf affords an argument in favour of Chriſtianity* 194
*Concerning ſome prophecies delivered in the New Teſtament* 194
*Whether any of them is applicable to the preſent adverſaries of Chriſtianity. One or two of them particularly conſidered* 195, 196, 197, 198

## DIALOGUE the EIGHTH.

*WHEN the mind may be ſaid to think freely, and when to be bigotted and enſlaved* 201
*What is the beſt diſpoſition of mind, in order to inſtruction* 202
*The overture that gives occaſion to the preſent Dialogue* 203

*The effects, first, of too great diffidence in ourselves; and secondly, of presuming too much on the strength of our own talents, in respect to the acquisition of knowlege* page-204, 205
*The definition of Libertinism; enlarged on* 206
*The antiquity of Libertinism* 206, 207
*Its progress traced thro' the* Jewish *History from the earliest accounts of time* 207, 208, 209
*The libertinism of the* Pagan *world, and of the Philosophers* 209
*That it was the chief obstacle to the reception of Christianity, and the chief cause of all the divisions among Christians* 209, 210
*That Popery, on the one hand, borrows considerably from it, and that the Reformation, on the other, gave great encouragement to it* 210
*Who among the Reformers gave most into it* 211
*Who among the* English *first distinguished himself as a successful propagator of Libertinism—in its utmost extent* 211
*Who gave rise to another species of Libertinism—With what view—On what system—And with what success* 212
*How Christianity is affected by this new sort of Libertinism* 213
*Concerning the harmony of principles observable among the propagators of Libertinism* 213, 214
*Concerning their disagreement* 214
*Whether the self-sufficiency of Libertinism, or the self-diffidence of Christianity, is the most likely to open our way to true religion* 215
*How a young mind may be best trained to Libertinism—By ridicule, exercised partly on religion*

*gion itſelf, and partly on its preachers— And by preaching up Libertine principles to ſuch a mind under the appearance of Chriſtianity* page 216, 217

*What diſpoſition of mind ought to be moſt carefully cultivated in a young Gentleman, in order to a thorough proficiency in Libertiniſm* 217, 218

*How a young Gentleman may be taught Libertiniſm out of the Bible, and Chriſtianity out of* Hobbes, Shafteſbury, Tindal, *&c.* 218

*How a fountain of Libertiniſm may be opened for him in his own breaſt* 218, 219, 220

*How Libertiniſm paſſes from one mind to another, till it comes to be publicly countenanced* 220

*Who are under a neceſſity of embracing Libertiniſm* 221

*What advantages Libertiniſm derived from the genius of* Cromwell's *time; from that of* Charles *the Second's reign; from the light the Clergy ſtood in at, and after, the late revolution* 222

*From peace, commerce, and wealth* 222, 223

*The advantage every man may derive from being caſuiſt to himſelf* 224

*Three degrees of Libertiniſm obſervable in a certain kind of writers, whoſe works have engaged the attention of the laſt and preſent century. Of the firſt, and ſecond* 224, 225

*Of* Diviſus 225, 226

*Of* Apobles 226, 227

*How it comes to pass that men of the greatest abilities may be led into errors of the grossest kinds* page 227
*Of the third class of Libertine writers* 228
*Of* Phyodexius, *and his writings* 228, 229
*Of his singular sincerity* 229, 230
*Of his other virtues* 231
*How truth ought to be propagated* 231
*How false teachers are to be known* 232
*Concerning the use of art in matters of religion* 232, 233
*Its effect on readers of moderate talents* 233
*Why the matter even of sermons may be more commodiously drawn from* Hutcheson *and* Shaftesbury, *than from the Scriptures* 234
*What kind of sermons best suit the present times* 235
*Which must be treated with indulgence, not severity* 236
*Concerning a late Introductory Discourse, &c. on the subject of miracles* 236
*Whether that Discourse is Deistical, or not* 237
*What is necessary to finish a Deist* 238
*The use of a peculiar system to every one, who would be easy in Deistical principles* 239
*Upon what grounds the Deists are charged with vanity, and whether justly* 240
*Of the Deistical writers, and first of Lord* Herbert 240
*The advantages arising to Deism from the nobility and great talents of this writer* 241
*Of* Hobbes, *and his peculiarities* 242

*Of*

*Of his talents; of his design in writing the* Leviathan *page* 243
*Of his design in publishing it* 243
*Of conversions from Deism, made by the terrors of death* 244
*Of* Blount, *and his Oracles*, &c. 245
*Of the Author of the Characteristics—Of his benevolence* 245, 246
*Of his humility and delicacy* 247
*His censure of the* English *writers* 247
*His Lordship's writings examined by the rules of true good-breeding* 248
*Whether piety is not essential to true good-breeding* 248
*Whether the same may not be said of sincerity* 249, 250
*Of good humour, and humility* 250
*Whether, in talking to persons we have a respect for, good-manners will allow us to indulge ourselves in long digressions, in wild flights of imagination, and in an affected obscurity* 251
*Whether good-manners will permit us to censure one man for the faults of another, or to condemn a whole body of men by the lump* 252
*Whether good-breeding will allow us to offer arguments in conversation, which we will not stay to hear answered, or to intermix those arguments with invectives* 252, 253
*Whether one who hath travelled, and is skilled in the polite arts, may, consistently with good manners, take a great deal deal of pains, on all occasions, not only to shew he hath travelled.*

*led, and is an adept in thoſe arts, but to upbraid others with their ignorance therein, and their never having been abroad. Theſe ingredients in the idea of good-breeding applied to his Lordſhip as a writer* page 253, 254
*His Lordſhip's new alternative for religion propoſed for the uſe of the Great, and the Refined* 254, 255
*His new criterion of truth conſidered* 256
*His Lordſhip's method of finding out the right rules of criticiſm from the excellencies of his own performances* 256, 257
*His method of quoting himſelf by references, and giving no other coherence to his writings, than what is found in his Index* 257
*His principle concerning natural and unnatural affections examined* 258, 259
*Whether his writings, both as to matter and ſtile, are proper precedents for young Gentlemen to form their principles, their ways of thinking, and manner of expreſſing themſelves by* 259
*Why his performances are ſo much liked by young Gentlemen. The effects of this* 260
*Of* Toland 261
*Of his birth, literature, talents, principles, and miſſion* 261
*Of the province committed to his pen* 261, 262
*Of the ill treatment he received from his brethren, and of his epitaph* 262, 263
*Of* Collins, *and whether the Inquiſition is eſtabliſhed in* England 263
*Of his Grounds, &c. and of the ſincerity obſervable in his profeſſing himſelf a Chriſtian, and writing*

*writing on the subject of prophecies* page 263

*Concerning his discourse of free-thinking, and the honesty of the author discovered therein* 264

*Of* Tindal, *the great Apostle of Deism. Of his changes in respect to religious profession; of the advantages he drew from thence* 265

*Of his morals, and their tendency to recommend his writings* 265, 266

*Whether a writer can be held to the consequences of his assertions* 266

*Of his prayers, and whether his last famous book is really a defence of Christianity* 266, 267

*Of* Mandeville, *and the fable of the Bees; of the consonancy between his and* Hobbes's *idea of human nature* 267

*Of the dissonancy between his, and that of Lord* Shaftesbury 268

*Of their agreement about particular evil, and general good* 269

*Of the* Independent Whig. *Concerning the professions made in that book, of regard for the Ministry and Christianity* 269

*Of the invectives levelled therein against the Clergy; of the useful tendency of those invectives* 269, 270

*Whether the design of that work is really to serve the cause of Christianity* 270

*Whether the writers of it were Christians, or not; and who were esteemed by them, as good, and who as bad Clergymen* 271

*The one only anſwer that can be given to this book. Why in this book faſting is conſidered rather as a ſin, than a duty* page 271, 272
*Whether faſting is of any uſe in ſubduing our paſſions* 272
*Whether high-feeding, and luxurious living, tend to inflame the paſſions* 273, 274, 275
Woolſton 276
Dodwell's *Chriſtianity not founded on argument. The ſcheme of this book* 276
*Human nature requires two things in order to its becoming truly religious; what they are* 277
*Whether reaſon muſt be intirely caſhiered, in order to our continuing Chriſtians* 277
*Whether a man muſt wholly ceaſe to be a Chriſtian, before he can, with ſufficient fairneſs, inquire into the merit of the controverſy about Chriſtianity* 278, 279
*Of* Morgan *and* Chubb; *and why remarked on together* 279
*Whether, if God made a revelation, he was diſappointed of his intention in ſo doing. Whether Chriſtianity admits of a defence, ſince theſe two writers failed in their attempt to defend it* 280
Morgan's *tour of opinions both in religion and phyſic, and the ſucceſs of it.* Chubb's *inſpiration* 280, 281
*Variety of ſyſtems in the writings of* Chubb; *whether the poſthumous works, aſcribed to him, are his or* Tindal's 281, 282

Chubb's

Chubb's *extraordinary genius, and his new gospel* page 282
*Whether he, or the other four Evangelists, knew best how to write the history of Christ* 283
Les Mœurs; *or* Manners; *whether this book is Deistical or not* 283, 284
*Of the morality contained therein; the ideas it conveys of marriage* 284, 285
*The stile and genius of this book* 285
*Of other Deistical writers, and of a book intituled,* Heaven open to all men 286
*What other sort of performances the Deistical writers might excel in, did they apply themselves to them* 287
*Whether dark dealings, and low artifices, become the character of an hero. Whether the arts of Deistical writers are owing to cowardice or prudence* 287, 288
*The thief of opinions* 288
*The use of matter foreign to the controversy about Christianity in managing that controversy, The Clergy, with their behaviour and maintenance* 289
*Ridicule* 289, 290
*Charity and zeal* 290
*Whether charity can subsist without zeal* 291, 292
*Of the refutations of Christianity drawn by Deistical writers from the works of Divines* 292
*The use of obscurity in Deistical writings; the liberty promised in those writings* 292, 293

The

*The great propenſity of young Academicians to Libertiniſm. Novelty a great promoter of it* page 293, 294

*Mr.* Puppy *invents a new kind of picktooth; and then a new religion* 294, 295

*The oppoſite methods and means by which Chriſtianity and Libertiniſm were propagated* 295

*The ſtile of the Goſpel* 295, 296

*The ſpirit of Chriſtianity* 296, 297

*How the practices of Libertines illuſtrate their principles. People of little underſtanding are led into principles of different kinds by the admiration in which they hold the writings of eminent authors* 297, 298

*Nothing more eaſy than to determine the merits of the controverſy about religion, in a ſummary way; and nothing more difficult, in the way of learning* 298, 299, 300

*Whether the epithets of antient and wiſe, or of modern and ignorant, belong to the preſent age* 300, 301

*Whether the preſent age is diſpoſed to a further improvement in knowlege, or to barbariſm* 301

*Of a ſpecies of readers, called Skimmers* 302

*Whether a Libertine or a Chriſtian is the moſt likely to be a man of virtue* 303, 304

*Whether Libertiniſm is of a good or evil tendency, in reſpect to the State* 304, 305

*Whether freedom and infidelity can ever be found together in the ſame people* 305, 306

*Whether the prevailing regard for the memory of* Cromwell *is conſiſtent with the republican*

*lican principles of thoſe who profeſs it, and whether that, together with ſome other peculiar diſpoſitions of the Times, is a ſign of health, or a ſymptom of diſorder, in the political body* page 306

*The motives, that render our Libertines ſo induſtrious in propagating their principles, not eaſily ſeen into by their enemies, and therefore difficult to be judged of* 307, 308

*Whether the ſuſpicion, that they are emiſſaries of the Pope, is well grounded; whether the Papiſts, who are oppoſers of Liberty, would endeavour to propagate Libertiniſm* 308, 309

*Whether they would make a conſcience of turning Proteſtants into Deiſts; or whether it would be prudence in them to attempt it* 309, 310

*Whether Jeſuits, properly qualified for propagating Deiſm in* England, *could be found* 310

*Whether ſome of our moſt noted Deiſts may not be ſuppoſed to have been Papiſts* 310, 311

*Whether Papiſts might not as well propagate Deiſm, as Fanaticiſm; and whether a Deiſt is more likely, than a Fanatic, to turn Papiſt, eſpecially at the approach of death* 311, 312

*Whether the Deiſts ought to be ſuſpected of Popery for uſing the arguments of Papiſts againſt our Church, drawn from its dependence on the State* 312, 313

*Or for uſing their arguments againſt the Scriptures; or for attacking Chriſtianity on Proteſtant principles* 313, 314

*Or*

*Or for quoting Protestant, not Popish Divines; or for admitting a kind of purgatory and indulgence, &c.* page 314, 315
*Whether Popery could dispense with a Papist's propagating Deism* 315
*The conclusion* 315
*A generous overture* 316, 317
*Declined* 317
*Another* 317, 318
*This also declined out of a regard to duty* 318

*End of the Contents to* VOL. II.

OPHIO-

# OPHIOMACHES:

OR,

# DEISM Revealed.

## DIALOGUE I.

DECHAINE, TEMPLETON, | CUNNINGHAM, SHEPHERD.

*Dechaine.* PARSON, a good-morning to you. Does your pretty little garden always raiſe you ſo early?

*Shep.* During the ſpring and ſummer it does; and at other ſeaſons I have other things to call me up, for the moſt part, before five in the morning.

*Dech.* Mr. *Templeton*, be acquainted with Mr. *Shepherd*.—Mr. *Cunningham*, let me preſent the Parſon of our Pariſh to you.

*Shep.* Gentlemen, I am much obliged to you for this favour. Pray will you walk into that turret, and be ſeated?

*Dech.* Here I ſuppoſe you ſtudy.

*Shep.* I read and ſleep in the room above; and, when any body comes to ſee me, here we ſit.

*Dech.* Who lives in the little houſe, thro' which we entered the garden?

*Shep.* It affords ſhelter to a poor relation, and his wife, with two ſervants.

*Dech.* I am told, you are ſtill a ſingle man yourſelf. How comes it to paſs that, in ſo long a time, you have doubled neither your perſon nor your chin? You don't faſt and mortify ſurely?

*Shep.* It is no fault in me, that I am not married; for my circumſtances are but narrow: nor is it a merit, that I am not fat; for my ſtate of health is but indifferent.

*Dech.* How modeſt! with another you would turn all this to Saintſhip.

*Shep.* No, Sir, I am as far from that ſpecies of diſſimulation as yourſelf.

*Dech.* It is a long time, *Shepherd*, ſince you and I were firſt acquainted.

*Shep.* Upwards of thirty years, I believe.

*Dech.* I have been now three months your landlord and neighbour, and you have never been to ſee me. This, I think, was not kind.

*Shep.* Indeed, Sir, I went to your houſe with that deſign; but your ſervants ſaid you were not at leiſure. Had my viſit been a thing of any conſequence to you, I ſuppoſe they would have told you I was to pay my reſpects.

*Dech.* Methinks, however, you might have come a ſecond time.

*Shep.* It is a common remark, that poor Clergymen are too intruding on their wealthy neighbours. Their conduct, which in this reſpect is generally thought forward, and troubleſome at leaſt, is aſcribed to low and unworthy motives. It was for this reaſon, Sir, that I thought proper to keep my diſtance, till you ſhould ſignify a deſire to ſee me. The gentleman from whom you purchaſed this eſtate, came every *Sunday* to Church, while he was in the country, and generally aſked me to go home with him. This hath been hitherto the cuſtom here; and as it gave me ſometimes an opportunity of ſeeing good company, and at the ſame time defended the gentleman from my viſits, excepting at ſuch ſeaſons as were moſt convenient to him, I think it was a very good one.

*Dech.*

*Dech.* Altho' I do not go ſo often to Church as my predeceſſor, yet I hope my way of ſerving God is not the leſs acceptable for being leſs public and ſhowy.

*Shep.* You miſtake me, Sir; I did not intend to put you on the defence of your conduct in reſpect to religion; I only intended to apologize for my own, in point of civility.

*Dech.* Ah Parſon! I believe I can gueſs what you intended well enough; but I muſt tell you, the great ſtreſs, laid by your order on the mere externals of religion, is of ill conſequence to the thing itſelf, and leads your hearers to believe, that running to the Church and the Sacrament may atone for great defects in matters of more real importance. Beſides, your particular forwardneſs in reproving, or ſay it were only in throwing out hints like this, by which the conduct of men in ſtation is arraigned, as it proceeds from a miſtaken zeal, if not from pride, anſwers no other end, but to diſoblige, and to render your perſon, and of conſequence your advice and function, diſagreeable. Your brethren, who know the world better, have, generally ſpeaking, found this method ſo diſobliging and unſucceſsful, that they have been forced to lay it aſide, and betake themſelves to a conduct more conformable to the times. Since the ceaſing of miracles, and other divine interpoſitions, the Church, I think, can ſcarcely be ſupported by any other, than human means. You muſt therefore ply to the world, you muſt keep in with the great ones, you muſt cultivate their good graces, and engage their countenance and intereſt, or I muſt tell you, in a little time you will have no Church at all. And take my word for it, Sir, this is not to be done by reproofs and ſuch-like freedoms, but by an inſinuating and ſoothing behaviour, by making the duties of religion eaſy and agreeable, by ſhaping thoſe and your own carriage to the politeneſs and freedom of the times you live in.

*Shep.* As to the duties of religion, it is not in my power to change the ſhape of them, and I think them agreeable enough to well-diſpoſed perſons, as our Saviour and his Apoſtles left them. As to my own carriage, I do not pretend to juſtify it. All I can ſay is, that I muſt

ſpeak the truth on pain of my own eternal ruin; and I do not take myſelf to be any further anſwerable for the effect, than as I may happen to hinder it by an improper manner of addreſſing myſelf to thoſe with whom I have to do. Now, in that reſpect, I endeavour to diſcharge my duty with all the little prudence and conduct I am maſter of. When I have not the ſucceſs I could wiſh, altho' I am very apt to blame my own weakneſs for it; yet I cannot help thinking it in ſome meaſure owing to the diſinclination of thoſe whom I ſpeak to. You, Sir, I believe, will own I have not yet attacked you in a very rude or ſhocking ſtyle.

*Cunn.* The ſtyle indeed was not uncivil; but your hint was, I think, a little early in a converſation but juſt commenced.

*Dech.* It was not altogether on account of Mr. *Shepherd*'s inſinuation about my not going to Church, that I took the liberty of offering my mite of advice, but becauſe I find he is cenſured by many people, and even by ſome of the Clergy, for too much boldneſs and freedom with men of power, in what he takes to be his duty of reproving; and the idea of his temper, which remains upon my memory ſince our acquaintance in the College, made me think a little advice, tending to ſoften his conduct in this article, not altogether unneceſſary.

*Cunn.* So far from it, that, if I miſtake not, he who knows the temper of the age we live in, muſt be ſenſible the Church, and the intereſts of the Clergy, are not to be ſupported, as you juſt now hinted, but by being well with the great.

*Shep.* That may be; and yet, if I be not guilty of the imprudence charged on me, the advice that hath been given me is better intended, than applied. But I hope, Sir, I need not prove to you, who are a Clergyman, that the Church of Chriſt hath promiſes from Scripture of more than human aſſiſtance; nor need I remind you, that it gained ground and prevailed in oppoſition to all the policy and power of greater perſons, than the miniſter of this pariſh hath occaſion to diſoblige.

*Dech.*

*Dech.* It prevailed indeed, as you ſay; but, upon re-recollection, you will find it did not gain *ground*, no not a foot of *ground*, until it had gained the great ones to its party.

*Shep.* The Church-lands then, and the wealth of the Clergy, are what you mean by the Church; and in that ſenſe of the word perhaps you may reaſon juſtly: but I mean by it, the whole body of Chriſtians, united in one Society, for the preſervation of Chriſtian principles, and the practice of Chriſtian duties. Now the Church, taken in this ſenſe, is never more in danger of ruin, than when its Clergy ſacrifice the intereſts and great ends of their function to worldly views; when they mince and qualify their doctrines to the palate or pride of their hearers; and when people, impatient of all reſtraints, and averſe to plain and ſalutary truths, do all they can to keep them at a diſtance from their conſciences. If the Clergy are to conſider themſelves as God's Ambaſſadors, they will ſpeak freely; and, if the people look upon them as ſuch, they will receive their meſſages with ſome degree of reſpect, or decency at leaſt.

*Temp.* God's Ambaſſadors! I thought my Lord *Shafteſbury* had ſo fully expoſed their Spiritual Excellencies on this claim of honour, that none of them would ever have talked in that ſtrain any more.

*Dech.* They do ſtill aſſume that ſtyle in country congregations; but I believe Mr. *Shepherd* is ſingular in uſing it to ſuch people as us. Ah *Shepherd! Shepherd!* I remember, when we were in the College together, I propheſied concerning your future fortunes. Did I not tell you then, boy as I was, and little acquainted with the world, that your warm temper, and high notions, bordering on enthuſiaſm, would never do, when reduced to practice; that you would make enemies to yourſelf, inſtead of friends to the Church; that you would be always poor and deſpiſed, and live, if not die, a martyr to your airy notions? And was I not too true a prophet? Could *Iſaiah* himſelf have predicted a chain of future events more exactly? Your liberty of ſpeech hath offended thoſe among the Laity, who could have ſerved you, and even given umbrage to the Biſhops.

*Shep.* And did I not propheſy too? Did I not tell you, I ſhould be very indifferent about thoſe events, and poſtpone all ſuch conſiderations to the diſcharge of my duty, if God ſhould ever think fit to admit me into the ſacred office, which I have now the honour to fill?

*Dech.* And ſo you would not accept of a fat Deanry or Biſhoprick? A likely thing indeed!

*Shep.* You never heard me ſay ſo. I would be glad to take a better benefice than the one I am now poſſeſſed of, if it were offered me; but this does not hinder me from living contented on my preſent income of four-and-thirty pounds a year, and my little farm, from which I draw near as much more.

*Dech.* The ſame turn of mind runs through all the Clergy. They are a mighty ſpiritual ſort of men; yet they graſp at all the temporalities they can lay their hands on. Why, *Shepherd*, you are a mere Pope, or *German* Biſhop, in miniature! While one part of you is ſoaring in ſermons, pſalms, and prayers; the other, and that the larger, is groveling in the earth, and growing to this naughty world, which you would perſuade us to be ſo much out of humour with. The farmer ſhews the parſon is not altogether ſatisfied with his condition. You are juſt as diſcontented as any other man in the like circumſtances; but the pride of your heart, which will not let you ſtoop, will never ſuffer you to climb. You aim at wealth and greatneſs, like the reſt of your tribe; but be aſſured on't, digging and grumbling never made a great man yet.

*Shep.* And I know they never will. In the mean time I do neither; nor have I any talent at thoſe more ſucceſsful arts of riſing you recommend to me, than which nothing can be more foreign to my purpoſe; for, I thank God, my deſires are as low as my circumſtances. Pray, Mr. *Dechaine*, are you ever uneaſy becauſe you are not a King?

*Dech.* No indeed; I never was once diſturbed by ſo wild a thought.

*Shep.* Nor I, by any expectation ſo chimerical, as that of better proviſion in the Church, after having behaved myſelf in ſuch a manner, that, unleſs mankind were made

made over again, I could have no reaſon to entertain ſuch hopes. However, ſuppoſing there were nothing, either in my paſt conduct, or in the times, to diſcountenance hopes of this kind, to what end ſhould I encourage them in myſelf? I eat, drink, ſleep, and dreſs, to all reaſonable intents and purpoſes, as well as you do; and what more ſhould one deſire? I have no family to provide for. I have none of thoſe anxieties, not to ſay remorſes, that attend the making, managing, or ſpending a great fortune. In a word, I have found by ſweet experience, that there is no difference between a great and a moderate income, but what is either in favour of the latter, or elſe ariſes wholly from a perverted imagination.

*Dech.* The old man ſtill! I teſſ thee, *Shepherd*, I am far from believing there is any thing more than grimace and hypocriſy, in all you have been ſaying on this ſubject theſe thirty years paſt. It is true I heard a very great Clergyman, ſince I came into the country, do you the honour to compare you to Cardinal *Spada*, who, while the Reformation was going on briſkly in *Switzerland*, went thither, and engaged in warm diſputes with Proteſtants, in hopes they would put him to death for his religion; but, to his great diſappointment, found them a very peaceable and well-conditioned people. This reflection ſprung from ſome inſtances that had been given in company of your flaming zeal againſt the prevailing opinions of the times. However, I no more believed you was ſeeking for the crown of martyrdom, than I did, that his Reverence, who entertained us with this ſneer at your expence, would ſnatch it from you, and put it on his own bacon-head. I believe I underſtand you better. As you have no friends, you ſcheme upon the idle reputation of great zeal, diſintereſtedneſs, and merit, in hopes by thoſe means to force ſome Biſhop to provide for you. But the Biſhops know too well how to unriddle ſuch a conduct, and form very different notions of your merit, from thoſe erected in that proud breaſt of yours. Nothing on earth can be more airy and whimſical, than hopes founded on a ſcheme like this, which I think the woful experience of twenty years

might by this time have put you out of humour with. Be adviſed by a friend to enter even yet, for perhaps it may not be too late, upon a more prudent courſe. Give a more genteel cut to your principles, at leaſt to your profeſſions. Be more obſequious to men in power. Endeavour to wriggle yourſelf in with their favourites, and do not neglect to cultivate even their ſervants. Let the Biſhops have your attendance. Pay them the court they expect. Be always a conformiſt to the company you are in. Let the principles or practices of your acquaintances, eſpecially your great acquaintances, point which way they will, beſure you go along; for no good, no reformation of them, nor promotion of yourſelf, is to be expected from contradiction and oppoſition.

*Shep.* I hope promotion in the Church is not to be obtained by ſuch arts as theſe; and as to the Biſhops, I have no reaſon to think ſo meanly of them, as to hope, that any court I could pay them, would induce them to prefer me to more deſerving objects of their favour. Altho' the times are ſuch, that it is not to be ſuppoſed, report is kinder to them than they deſerve, yet I queſtion, whether at any time ſince the eſtabliſhment of our Church, that order ſtood higher in the juſt eſteem of all who are competent judges of either their abilities or behaviour. This alone is ſufficient to prevent in me the leaſt hope of their regard, at leaſt of obtaining it by ſuch means as you recommend, which they have too much ſenſe not to ſee thro', and I too little addreſs and obſequiouſneſs to employ.

*Dech.* Be always poor and deſpicable then. There are ſome men of ſo unhappy a make, and caſt in a mould ſo uncouth, and croſs to all the courſes of the world, that unleſs the world will bend to them, their advancement in it is impoſſible. A perſon of this ſtamp is always in the wrong, and therefore always unſucceſsful in every thing he undertakes.

*Shep.* How much more happy is he, who is ſo framed by nature, and prepared by art, as to be always in the right, who never errs in his reaſonings, nor fails in his ſchemes! Nothing about ſuch a perſon as this can go wrong.

wrong. His very watch partakes of the infallibility of its owner, and is always in the right.

*Dech.* If your hint is intended for me, give me leave to ſay, I think the reputation and fortune, to which I have raiſed myſelf by acting on maxims quite oppoſite to yours, ſhew in good earneſt, I have been much oftener in the right than your Reverence, and that to much better purpoſe.

*Shep.* Not unleſs you have alſo raiſed yourſelf to higher contentment than mine.

*Dech.* Contentment! Do you think an eſtate of four thouſand a year, great reputation and buſineſs at the bar, and an honourable place at court, can afford a man nothing above contentment? I have laboured for the wind indeed, if that only felicity of beggars is all I can extract from ſuch ample means. Take my word for it, Parſon, my fortune affords me pleaſures, to which a fat capon at a Chriſtening, the higheſt delight you know, is not to be compared.

*Shep.* My ignorance of them makes me ſatisfied without them, and I ſhall take your own word for it, that you are happy enough, provided you have preſerved the conſcience and character of an honeſt man, which is not always the caſe with thoſe who have amaſſed vaſt fortunes in the ſpace of a few years.

*Dech.* As to my reputation, I can appeal to my buſineſs for the moſt ſolid kind of voucher in its favour. People of high rank, and good underſtanding, do not uſually truſt their fortunes to Lawyers of ſmall reputation. As to my conſcience, the late Mr. *Templeton*, father to this young Gentleman here, left him at the age of fifteen, with an eſtate of five thouſand a year, and upwards of fifty thouſand pounds in money, to my care; and no one can ſay, I have not diſcharged this important truſt like a man of honour. I have improved his fortune; I have given him a polite education; and I have bred him a defenſive Lawyer, inſomuch that it will hereafter be in his power, at leaſt to preſerve what he has.

*Shep.* You forget to tell us with what principles you formed his mind, that being, in my opinion, a matter of

far greater conſequence to him, than all his wealth, law, and politeneſs.

*Dech.* What if I inſtilled no principles into him at all; but only endeavoured to root out thoſe he had before?

*Shep.* Provided they were bad ones, you did one half of what a good friend ſhould do.

*Dech.* They were ſuch as a ſorry Parſon, and two or three nurſery-maids, thought fit to obtrude upon an ingenuous nature, that needed no inſtruction.

*Shep.* It may be, the principles were good for all that. You ſay you gave him a polite education; did you not, among other things, take care to have him well inſtructed in muſic, dancing, and riding the great horſe?

*Dech.* I did.

*Shep.* His mind muſt be of a very different make from the minds of other men, if it did not require to be taught certain internal ſciences, analogous to thoſe, and infinitely more ornamental, as well as uſeful. Pray Mr. *Templeton*, have you read my Lord *Shaftesbury*'s characteriſtics?

*Temp.* Yes, Sir; and think them very fine performances.

*Shep.* I gueſſed as much by your quoting him a little while ago. You do not forget, I ſuppoſe, what he ſays concerning *the internal muſic and harmony of affections.*

*Temp.* He ſpeaks incomparably on that, as well as all other topics.

*Shep.* Does he not take the groſs of mankind to be void of that harmony, and the grace of moral action, reſulting from it?

*Temp.* I think he does.

*Shep.* And does he not endeavour to remedy this great defect in his readers?

*Temp.* He does.

*Dech.* Ay, and it was in order to give the young mind of my ward an happy and graceful turn, that I put my Lord *Shaftesbury*'s works into his hands, as ſoon as ever he came under my care; and directed Mr. *Cunningham*, who was his tutor, to impreſs the notions of that incomparable writer as ſtrongly on his mind as poſſible.

*Shep.*

*Shep.* If they were better fitted to answer that end than the principles he had imbibed in the nursery, you did very well: but, it seems, I misunderstood you; for I thought your whole endeavour, on the article of his education, had been to root out the principles of the nursery from a nature so ingenuous as to need no instruction.

*Dech.* My Lord *Shaftesbury* hath an admirable hand at rooting out the exotic weeds of a wrong education, which is in my opinion the only work of education worth labouring in; for, as soon as they are removed, the beautiful and wholsome plant of virtue, which is natural to the soil, shoots up without any further culture, and quickly comes to maturity.

*Shep.* It is very well. Every thing, I find, may be taught, but Christianity; and all that is said against instruction in general, is levelled only against Christian instruction. And pray, Mr. *Cunningham*, did you not sometimes think it an odd employment in a Parson to eradicate from the mind of your pupil the principles of God's word, and to implant, in the place of them, a System of Deism?

*Cunn.* What if I did not look on the principles I found in him, as derived from the word of God, but rather from the superstition of an ignorant Clergyman, and two or three silly women? And what if I think my Lord *Shaftesbury*, who was a man of candour and honour, sincere in his frequent professions of Christianity?

*Shep.* Be so good, Mr. *Templeton*, as to let us know whether the substance of what you was taught in the nursery, is not contained in the Catechism of the Church of *England*; and whether you was not made to get the Catechism itself by rote.

*Dech.* There is no need of catechising at present either Mr. *Templeton* or his tutor. As to the latter, at whom I perceive you are striking in this sly inquiry of yours, I take him to be full as sound a Christian as yourself, without any of that stiffness, or sourness, or formality, that render your sort of Christianity so troublesome to yourself and others. You don't care for him, perhaps, because you may have heard he was educated at *Glascow*, where, if we may judge by those, who come from thence, the

minds of young perſons are formed to a much more open and liberal turn, than in the Univerſities of *England*. The good effects of his education appear in his behaviour, which is humane and prudent. I do believe he hath not a ſingle enemy upon the face of the earth. He hath many and powerful friends, and hath already taſted the fruits of his own merit, and their attachment to him, in two rich benefices, which he is now in the enjoyment of. Nay, I think I may aſſure him, his riſe in the world is not yet at its meridian.

*Cunn.* You are always very good, Sir; and I ſhall have more merit a great deal, than I dare think myſelf poſſeſſed of, if I can deſerve the ſmalleſt part of your favours. While I am ſo happy as to be well with ſuch perſons as you, I have enough to comfort and defend me againſt the envy of lower people.

*Dech.* I HAVE been, I know not how, diverted from mentioning to Mr. *Shepherd* the occaſion of our viſit. Pray, Parſon, do you often hold forth to your plain congregation on ſuch topics as employed you laſt *Sunday?*

*Shep.* Very ſeldom, Sir.

*Dech.* Why, ſo I thought. It was then, I ſuppoſe, to honour us on our firſt appearance in your Church, that you choſe to be ſo refined.

*Shep.* It was not with a view to do you any honour, that I preached as I did, but to lay before you ſome reaſonings which I judged proper for your conſideration.

*Dech.* And why proper for our conſideration, I pray you? Had any-body told you we were Libertines or Deiſts?

*Shep.* I have indeed heard it ſaid, that you are but too inclinable to Deiſm, and that you have brought Mr. *Templeton* partly into your own ſentiments about religion. I was the more confirmed in my fears, that it might be ſo, by your not coming to Church, and by what hath been lately whiſpered about the neighbourhood concerning an odd ſort of induſtry, ſaid to be uſed by you, in propagating looſe principles among our country Gentlemen over a bottle, both at your own, and ſome of your neighbours

bours houſes. Theſe things laid together, gave me occaſion to recollect, that, when we ſtudied at *Oxford*, you even then began to diſcover the ſeeds of libertiniſm, particularly by ſpeaking ſlightly of ſeveral matters in the ſcriptural hiſtory; and I remember, one day, more eſpecially, you undertook to prove, that the *Theatre* was by far a more magnificent and ſumptuous building, than the *Temple* of *Solomon*.

*Dech.* I am not much ſurpriſed, that your country-people, who are but an ignorant and clumſy ſort of folks, can't tell how to diſtinguiſh between one's talking freely on certain points of religion, purely for the ſake of ſpeculation and exerciſe, and making a ſolemn confeſſion of one's faith by a creed; but the ingenious Mr. *Shepherd*, who had his education in a place where every thing is diſputed, amazes me, when I hear him recollecting the remarks of a boy, to confirm thoſe of his ignorant neighbours, upon a liberty, which we cannot be deprived of, without ſinking immediately into Barbariſm.

*Shep.* There is the more occaſion, you ſee, for thoſe who deſire to be thought Chriſtians, to take care how they ſpeak in the hearing of ſuch people as us.

*Dech.* It is of no conſequence what opinion 'Squire this one, and Parſon t'other one, entertains of one's principles, unleſs principles are aſſumed for ſhew and parade. But, ſuppoſing I was really a Deiſt, could you have the vanity to hope, that, by ſlipping your fierce triple-headed *Cerberus* of a ſermon at me, you might bark or worry me out of my way of thinking? Indeed, Doctor, the ſermons of you Clergy have but little weight with people of any tolerable taſte or underſtanding. The brute thunders of the Pulpit can neither hurt nor frighten any, but the Vulgar.

*Shep.* I never intended to frighten, much leſs to hurt any body, by my ſermons; and in that particularly, which, it ſeems, you have taken offence at, I am ſure there was nothing, that could either hurt or terrify thoſe for whoſe uſe it was deſigned.

*Dech.* That is very true; and I am ſure there was as little that could convince. It could have no effect anyway, but to ſatisfy the underſtanding part of your audience, that the Parſon was a weak man; and had you

been modeſt enough to think ſo before you preached it, you might have ſaved yourſelf the trouble of an impertinent harangue, that kept you about forty minutes longer from your beef and pudding, than there was any ſort of occaſion for.

*Shep.* Yet, as long as I am convinced I was doing my duty, nothing you can ſay, even though it were, if poſſible, more genteel and witty, than your jeſt about *beef* and *pudding*, ſhall make me wiſh it undone.

*Dech.* Bleſs us! how polite we ſhall grow under the corrections of a country Parſon! But enough of this. Do you really think you could ſupport the poſitions you undertook to prove in that ſermon, now that you are out of the pulpit, and one may have word about with you?

*Shep.* I think I can, and will very readily undertake it, provided you will promiſe to moderate the keenneſs of your wit a little, and enter on the point with ſomewhat leſs contempt for the reaſonings of a man ſo far below you in circumſtances. If we do not contend for a mere triumph, but ſeriouſly ſet ourſelves to ſearch for truth, reaſon, even from me, will have its full weight with you; and I ſhall readily ſubmit on my ſide, as ſoon as ever reaſon ſhews itſelf on yours.

*Dech.* Agreed, agreed; do you however take your own way of arguing, and don't pretend to tie me to it, becauſe I am as free to uſe mine.

*Shep.* With all my heart.

*Dech.* If I forget not, the chief poſitions, on which the reſt of your diſcourſe depended, were theſe: 1ſt, *That the evidence of poſſible facts, ſaid to be done in ages long ſince paſt, is matter of faith.* 2dly, *That he who denies ſuch facts to have been done, can found his diſſent on nothing elſe but faith.* And, 3dly, *That, of conſequence, he who denies the hiſtorical part of the Chriſtian religion, the facts of which are all poſſible, cannot be ſure it is falſe, can only believe it to be ſo.* Do I rightly repreſent the points you endeavoured to prove, and afterwards to draw concluſions from, in your Sermon?

*Shep.* You do, Sir, in the faireſt manner.

*Dech.*

*Dech.* These doctrines were new and surprising to me. But before I enter upon the discussion of points, that may possibly carry us out into some length of debate, give me leave to premise, that altho' I frequently may have occasion to serve myself with the arguments and expressions of a Deist, you are only to consider me as personating a man of Deistical principles, merely for argumentation's sake; and let me at the same time assure you, Sir, that I am sincerely a Christian.

*Shep.* May I then speak to you, without offence, as if it were to a professed Deist, provided I understand you to be no more than arguing, merely for speculation, in the character and mask of a Deist?

*Dech.* You may; and I in return will consider you as arguing, merely for your bread, in the character and mask of a Christian.

*Shep.* Well, that will shew a kind of benevolence in you as humane and tender, as if it had sprung from the heart and pen of a *Shaftesbury* himself. Be pleased to proceed.

*Dech.* AS to your first proposition, namely, *that the evidence of possible facts, said to be done in ages long since past, is matter of faith*, I readily grant it. We can only believe such facts, they being in themselves neither self-evident nor demonstrable. But, before we go any farther, it will be proper to observe to you, that as faith is the lowest and weakest among the three degrees of assent, so it is that only, and no more, that can be afforded to Christianity.

*Shep.* It is very true. But as a demonstration, which, in the order and progress of knowlege, follows from, and depends on self-evidence, if it is once fully and fairly made out, justly claims as intire an assent, as self-evidence itself, so there are, in some cases, certain degrees of report and credibility, to which an assent, as full and intire, is given by all men, as to the most self-evident or demonstrable propositions.

*Dech.* Pray, Sir, will you favour me with an instance or two?

*Shep.* Were you ever at *Constantinople*, Sir?

*Dech.*

*Dech.* Never.

*Shep.* Yet I believe you have no more doubt there is ſuch a city, than that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones.

*Temp.* I am ſure I have not.

*Dech.* Nor I; but what then?

*Shep.* Pray, Mr. *Dechaine*, did you ſee *Julius Cæſar* aſſaſſinated in the capitol?

*Dech.* A pretty queſtion! No, indeed, Sir.

*Shep.* Have you any doubts about the truth of what is told us by hiſtorians concerning that memorable tranſaction?

*Dech.* Not the leaſt.

*Shep.* Pray, is it either ſelf-evident or demonſtrable to you, at this time and place, that there is any ſuch city as *Conſtantinople*, or that there ever was ſuch a man as *Cæſar*?

*Dech.* By no means.

*Shep.* And you have all you know, concerning the being of either the city, or the man, merely from the report of others, who had it from others, and ſo on, thro' many links of tradition?

*Dech.* I have.

*Shep.* You ſee then, that there are certain caſes, in which *the evidence of things not ſeen*, nor either ſenſibly or demonſtrably perceived, can juſtly challenge ſo intire an aſſent, that he who ſhould pretend to refuſe it in the fulleſt meaſure of acquieſcence, would be deſervedly eſteemed the moſt ſtupid or perverſe of mankind.

*Dech.* Suppoſe I ſhould, to ſhorten our work, grant you all this; are you ſo weak as to imagine you can put the facts related in the four goſpels, or any of them, for inſtance the reſurrection of *Jeſus*, on the ſame footing of authority and evidence, with the aſſaſſination of *Cæſar*?

*Shep.* If I cannot put it on an higher and firmer foundation, I ill deſerve the pay and livery of my Maſter. Let us, however, for the preſent, keep cloſe to the method preſcribed to us by the three propoſitions, cited from my diſcourſe. And, as to the firſt, with the obſervation you juſt now introduced under it, tending to

ſhew,

ſhew, that the evidence of the Chriſtian religion is of the weakeſt kind, altho' I think I have ſaid enough to prove that kind of evidence capable of certainty, yet I am far from being ſatisfied with your granting it merely to ſhorten our work; and ſhall therefore beg leave to obſerve to you, that the moſt important affairs of life are founded and tranſacted upon this ſort of evidence. A merchant truſts all his fortune to advices from foreign countries, ſuch as that there are cities, commodities, traders, in *Turky* or *China*, none of which he ever ſaw; and often relies on factors, with whom he is not in the leaſt acquainted. On this bottom is built all foreign commerce, and even the greater part of our domeſtic trade. The civil and military liſts are paid by it, and every thing you, or his Lordſhip, or his Majeſty, enjoys, that is better than acorns and water, is derived from it. The Judge determines property, and liberty, and life, by oaths, which are only the *evidence of things not ſeen* by him; and neither he nor all the Lawyers upon earth can find out any other evidence, more to be depended on, for the execution of law and juſtice; nay, the nature of thoſe important matters mentioned doth not, in one caſe among ten thouſand, admit of any other evidence. The King is repreſented, and his power exerciſed, by Sheriffs, Juſtices, Conſtables, *&c.* whom he never ſaw, and in places vaſtly remote; and ſubjects obey them ſo far as to ſurrender their goods, liberties, lives, without ever haveing ſeen either his Majeſty, or his commiſſion; nay, his Majeſty himſelf never ſaw one among a thouſand of the commiſſions, by which his authority is delegated. From hence it may appear, that wealth, liberty, property, life, peace, and ſociety, depend almoſt wholly on faith; and that Kings, Judges, Merchants, the wiſeſt of men, as well as the weakeſt, are obliged to ſee with other peoples eyes, to hear with other peoples ears, to judge by other peoples reaſon, and to act by other peoples hands, over the face of the whole earth, and in matters of the laſt conſequence.

*Dech.* And are they not often deceived by truſting to imperfect lights, by confiding in other peoples eyes and judgments?

*Shep.*

*Shep.* They are indeed; but I think not oftener than by truſting too confidently to their own. The purblind man muſt ſee for himſelf; the half-witted wretch muſt judge for himſelf; thoſe who can ſee very well, muſt take upon them to diſtinguiſh objects that lie beyond the verge of ſight; and thoſe who have good judgments, muſt canvaſs and decide ſuch points, as are above human comprehenſion and reaſon. This proceeds from pride; and what is the conſequence? Why, an infinity of errors in matters of ſenſe, and of ſtrict and undeniable demonſtrations, that are really falſe.

*Temp.* The Doctor hath ſtruck out a beautiful field for thought, that is intirely new to me.

*Shep.* And yet, Sir, one would think there is ſcarcely a day in which the common affairs of life might not ſuggeſt it to one.

*Temp.* It is very true; and I now wonder how it could eſcape me. So it fares with the proofs for the being of a God. The world is full of them; every atom of matter carries an evidence for that great truth; and yet I know not but an ordinary eye might gaze for a long time on the ſun, an animal, or a tree, without tracing the connexion between thoſe works of wiſdom and their Author, if nobody hinted it to him.

*Shep.* Your obſervation is good, and thoſe who had the care of your education, ought, I ſhould think, to have taught you the ſtrength of moral evidence long ago. They might have led you thro' great part of this field, as you call it, the hither ſide of it being open time out of mind.

*Cunn.* Reflections thrown upon his education, now that he is full five-and-twenty, and can think for himſelf, turn to flouts upon him, rather than his tutor.

*Temp.* If there was a flout intended, I believe it was not for me; however, I wiſh the appearance of it had been avoided.

*Shep.* All I intended, Sir, was to ſhew you by that inſtance, that, notwithſtanding all the boaſts I have heard of the open and candid education you have got, certain notices of the greateſt conſequence may have been induſtriouſly kept out of your ſight, and, with the ſame intention,

intention, others, as prejudicial, thrown in your way. This hint, which, for aught I can ſee to the contrary, may be very neceſſary to you, neither Mr. *Dechaine*'s two great eſtates, nor Mr. *Cunningham*'s two fat pariſhes, high as they ſet them above me, can hinder me from repeating to you, becauſe I have ſome reaſon to think it concerns your happineſs in this world and the next.

*Dech.* We are obliged to believe your duty forces you to be rude, and ſo muſt bear with you the beſt we can. But let us return to your ſecond propoſition; which was this, *that he who denies ſuch poſſible facts as are ſaid to have been done in ages long ſince paſt, can found his diſſent on nothing elſe, but faith.*

*Shep.* I Hope that point will not detain us long, becauſe I think it ſeems to be almoſt evident in itſelf.

*Dech.* To me I am ſure it appears exceedingly ſtrange: I thought faith had been the very reverſe of diſbelieving; that it had conſiſted in actually and poſitively believing; and that he who hath not faith, is called in Scripture, and by all the world, an unbeliever.

*Shep.* That is but playing with words. Are there not four kinds of evidence; and, correſponding with them, four kinds or degrees of aſſent?

*Dech.* There are; namely, *Self-evidence*, *Demonſtration*, *Probability*, and *Credibility*: And the aſſent given to the firſt, is *Intuition*; to the ſecond, *Knowlege*; to the third, *Opinion*; and to the fourth, *Belief*.

*Shep.* Do you intuitively perceive, that poſſible facts, ſaid to have been done in former ages, were not done?

*Dech.* No.

*Shep.* Can you demonſtrate, that ſuch facts were not done?

*Dech.* Not, unleſs there were other facts to render thoſe impracticable and impoſſible.

*Shep.* But you cannot demonſtrate, that there ever were ſuch other facts.

*Dech.* It is very true: in ſome caſes I cannot.

*Shep.* It follows then, that, in ſuch caſes, you can only believe, ſuch facts were never done; for as you cannot demonſtrate,

monſtrate, ſo neither can you render it probable, that ſuch facts never happened.

*Dech.* Not ſo faſt, Sir. The third head of your diſcourſe was to this effect; *In conſequence of what hath been laid down in the two former propoſitions, he who denies the hiſtorical part of the Chriſtian Religion, the facts of which are all poſſible, cannot be ſure it is falſe, can only believe it ſo to be.* Let me obſerve to you, Sir, that no degree of teſtimony can ever prove an impoſſible fact to have been done; and that if the higheſt degree of teſtimony is oppoſed by as high a degree of improbability, the opinion founded on the one will deſtroy, or at leaſt ſuſpend, the belief that may be claimed by the other.

*Shep.* This I readily acknowlege.

*Dech.* In conſequence of this, I muſt inſiſt, that if ſome of the facts, delivered in the Goſpel-hiſtory, be impoſſible, or extremely improbable, this will demonſtrate that hiſtory to be falſe, or at leaſt put the negative faith of a Deiſt, if faith you will call it, on a very firm foundation.

*Shep.* I own it will.

*Dech.* To avoid prolixity then, let us fix on a ſingle fact, among ſeveral of the ſame kind, and conſider a little, whether it be not impoſſible, or extremely unfeaſible. If I miſtake not, *Jeſus* himſelf put the truth and reality of his Meſſiahſhip on his riſing again from the dead; ſo that, if he did not actually die, and riſe again, he could not have been that Son and Meſſenger of God, he gave himſelf out for.

*Shep.* He did.

*Dech.* Pray now, in ſober and good earneſt, was that a very poſſible fact?

*Shep.* I think it was. If our Saviour had not thought ſo, and been ſure he could perform it, he had ſenſe enough to have put the truth of his miſſion on ſomewhat more within his power, or to avoid the leaving it to any further trials.

*Dech.* For my part, that which is againſt nature, I ſhall always think impoſſible. The laws of the creation are ſtated and invariable things, and, as long as the world laſts,

laſts, make ſuch a reunion of ſoul and body, ſuch a reviviſcence of a dead carcaſe, as impoſſible, as it is for water to burn, or fire to wet us.

*Shep.* They certainly do, unleſs the power of God, who made all things, and can alter them as he pleaſes, ſhould ſuſpend thoſe laws, and, by a force ſuperior to them, ſhould compel matter to produce effects contrary to theirs. To reſtore a dead body to life, is at leaſt as eaſy, as it was to give it life at firſt.

*Dech.* But before you fly to the power of God, in order to account for ſuch an amazing fact, you would do well to conſider, whether it is conſiſtent with the Majeſty of an Almighty Being, who can bring about all his purpoſes in a natural way, whoſe works do not, like thoſe of men, need to be taken in pieces, in order to be mended, to break in upon his own ſcheme of creation by an act of violence, that muſt plainly ſhew him ſenſible of a defect in what he had made. His works are all perfect, and the moral part, which is the moſt excellent of his works, being the moſt perfect of all, cannot be ſuppoſed to want aſſiſtance from any ſuſpenſion or reverſal of the natural.

*Shep.* Does not morality conſiſt in the goodneſs or badneſs of actions?

*Dech.* It does.

*Shep.* And can any action be either morally good or evil, if the agent hath it not in his power to do it, or let it alone?

*Dech.* It cannot.

*Shep.* All moral actions therefore, as ſuch, depend upon the freedom of the agent, to do that which is good or evil.

*Dech.* No doubt on't they do.

*Shep.* Now man, who is a free and moral agent, may do that which is evil.

*Dech.* He may.

*Shep.* As this is the privilege of men in general, ſo men in general may do evil, and be wicked.

*Dech.* This I grant.

*Shep.* It follows therefore, that irregularities and defects may ariſe in the moral world, thro' an abuſe of the afore-

afore-mentioned privilege, notwithſtanding the perfection, in which this part of the creation may have been ſent into being. Now to remedy theſe defects, if they ſhould at any time happen, and become general, bring the means from whence you will, can be no unreaſonable object of God's goodneſs; and we cannot, I think, without great preſumption, ſay, either that God would not, or could not, for a time at leaſt, ſuſpend or reverſe the laws of the material world, provided ſuch his ſuſpenſion might be made ſubſervient to ſo excellent a purpoſe. Now this ſuſpenſion, or reverſal, is as natural, as the courſe of nature itſelf; for what is nature, but the free-will of God exerted in the works of creation? The ſupreme will, Sir, may act as naturally, and as wiſely, when at any time it inverts the common courſe of things, as you do, when you turn back the hand of your watch, in order to bring it nearer to the time of day. Thus I hope it appears, that both in reſpect to the fact itſelf of the reſurrection, and to God the Agent, it may have been poſſible enough, unleſs it be ſaid, that there were no defects nor corruptions in the moral world, that required a reformation; or that the miracle of our Saviour's reſurrection, no more than the reſt of his miracles, could be judged by God to be a proper proof of the Reformer's miſſion.

*Dech.* And may not this be ſaid?

*Shep.* It may; but not, I think, with any ſhew of reaſon. There was wickedneſs enough in the world, at our Saviour's coming, to make a reformation neceſſary. The wiſeſt of the *Gentiles*, as well as the *Jews*, thought ſo; and that the miracles, particularly the reſurrection, wrought in proof of our Saviour's miſſion, were very ſtrong and effectual arguments in favour of it, and therefore worthy to be employed by the Divine wiſdom for that purpoſe, may appear evident to any one, who conſiders, not only the nature of the caſe, which to human apprehenſion ſeems incapable of any other ſatisfactory proofs, but alſo the conviction actually wrought by their means in prodigious numbers of people, who, had they not been eye-witneſſes of demonſtrations ſo irreſiſtible, could never, by any other means, have been induced to

ſuffer

ſuffer and die, as they did, for facts ſo hard to be believed, and for principles ſo irreconcileable to the corruptions of human nature.

*Dech.* As to the difficulty of believing ſuch facts, you will not ſurely inſiſt on that as an argument for your faith, ſince, in the apprehenſion of every ſober perſon, it muſt appear an inſuperable obſtacle thereunto.

*Shep.* Ordinary facts are believed upon common report, or even ſlight appearances; and therefore, in reſpect to ſuch, miſtakes are eaſy and uſual; but no one will become evidence for a miracle at the expence, or even riſque, of his life, without the higheſt and ſtrongeſt conviction the nature of the thing will bear.

*Tem.* Surely the reſurrection of Chriſt, or any other man, cannot be a thing impoſſible with God. It is neither above his power, nor, when employed for a ſufficient purpoſe, inconſiſtent with his majeſty, wiſdom, and goodneſs.

*Dech.* Well, *Templeton*, the Parſon is likely to make a very ſtrong believer of you. He could not reaſonably hope for a more forward diſciple.

*Temp.* It is not juſt now that I began to think the reſurrection poſſible.

*Dech.* No, I believe not. You probably thought it ſo, ever ſince you was fed with that, and other the like food for babes, in the nurſery. Children ſuck in marvellous tales at a ſtrange rate, and find it difficult to clear their heads of them at a riper age.

*Temp.* That is not my caſe, if I know any thing of my own mind. I think it, in itſelf, a very amazing fact; and, were it not well atteſted, ſhould never believe it; but I muſt be excuſed, if I can ſee no impoſſibility in it, nor in any of the miracles ſaid to have been wrought by Chriſt, or his Apoſtles. What do you think, Mr. *Cunningham?*

*Cunn.* I do not think it impoſſible.

*Shep.* So much, at leaſt, I expected from you. But what if it ſhould, all things conſidered, appear highly probable?

*Dech.* That, I believe, you will find it hard to prove, take what you will into conſideration.

*Shep.*

*Shep.* If sin, universally spread, brought universal death into the world; if it was worthy of a compassionate God to send some one into the world to take away sin; if miracles were the best proof of his mission; if his own resurrection was the most convincing miracle that could be wrought, and at the same time carried with it the most experimental assurance of an happy victory over all the effects of sin, and a comfortable renovation of the moral world; and if it was as easy for God to raise up his Son from death, as it is for one man to awake another out of sleep; I think the resurrection of Christ very far removed from improbability.

*Dech.* Ay, very far, no doubt on't; but methinks you took a great many *ifs* to eke out that argument.

*Shep.* I intended it rather as matter for you to form arguments out of, and as an appeal to common sense, than as a regular syllogism, raised by mood and figure.

*Dech.* Oh! Sir, you may spare yourself the trouble of furnishing me with matter.

*Shep.* But, Sir, while you throw into one scale the improbability of certain facts related in the Gospel-history and aggravate it as much as you can, give me leave to put into the other that authority, and those vouchers, on which the credibility of the facts objected to is founded, and hint a little the weak authorities the Deists are forced to support their opposite faith with, in relation to those facts. We are all, both Christians and Libertines, believers; but which side believes aright, is the point to be considered.

*Dech.* If it is, proceed to it.

*Shep.* Those believers, whose faith it is to rely on the truth of the Christian-history, rest their assent on a written report, made by eye-witnesses; which report the various Churches and Sects, jealous of one another, took care to preserve genuine and uncorrupted, at least in all material points, and all the religious writers in every age since have amply attested. That the first spreaders of this report were competent witnesses, can hardly be questioned, when it is considered, that, in respect to facts, they only reported what they saw; in doing which they were so far from having any interest, that they forfeited every

every comfort and pleaſure of life, and life itſelf, for the ſake of gaining followers to a better. In the caſe of ordinary facts, indifferent witneſſes may ſuffice; but, when miracles were to be recorded, Providence, for the ſatisfaction of diſtant places and ages, gave witneſſes, who embraced the terrors of death to confirm their teſtimony. who, if I may be allowed the expreſſion, were ſworn on their own blood to the truth of their evidence. The Libertine believers, on the other hand, whoſe faith conſiſts in a perſuaſion, that the Chriſtian religion is an impoſture, found their opinion on that of the *Jews*, who perſecuted and crucified Chriſt, and on that of the *Romans*, who put his followers to death, by way of anſwer to the doctrines they taught, and to the evidence of the facts they reported. From them only can any teſtimony againſt Chriſt, or his followers, be derived. Now, as it is plain, from a favourite principle in Libertiniſm, that they were prejudiced againſt Chriſtianity by their perſecuting it, their teſtimony is not to be relied on. The *Jews* cauſed our Saviour to be put to death, leſt the *Romans* ſhould come, and take away their place and nation. And the *Romans*, if they had ſuffered the Chriſtian religion to ſpread itſelf without oppoſition, ſaw they muſt have given up their gods, to whom they were blindly bigotted, and their vices, to which they were ſtill more ſtrongly attached. They therefore ſet themſelves to refute it with fire and fagot, and thought to ſubdue it, as they had done every thing elſe, by force. To believe in vouchers like theſe, againſt the teſtimony given in favour of Chriſtianity, is to have a ſtrange redundancy of faith. Yet no one contemporary *Jew* or *Roman* hath left any thing on record, to invalidate the truth of our Saviour's reſurrection, or the reality of any one miracle, in the Goſpel-hiſtory; ſo that the Libertine is deſtitute of any teſtimony to found his faith on, and is forced to build on the mere cruelty of tyrants and perſecutors.

*Dech.* The Chriſtians had the world long enough to themſelves to deſtroy all records and memorials, that made againſt them.

*Shep.* And ſo the faith of a Deiſt reſts upon this, that there might have been ſuch records, and that thoſe records

might have been ſufficient to expoſe the falſity of the Chriſtian hiſtory. Prodigious faith! not reſembling a grain of muſtard-ſeed, but like a mountain! Indeed I have not ſeen ſuch, no not among Papiſts. But, Sir, had there been ſuch teſtimony as you ſpeak of, againſt the reſurrection, and other miracles of our Saviour, his religion did not then want enemies as bitter, and as watchful to deſtroy it, as the modern Deiſts, who certainly had not failed to ſtifle it in its very birth, could they have brought ſo good evidence againſt it.

*Dech.* The Chriſtian religion, for many years, ran ſo low among the people, was confined to ſo obſcure a corner of the world, and made, in every reſpect, ſo inconſiderable a figure, as not to come even into the notice of perſons ſufficiently awake to an inquiry about the proofs either for or againſt it. All this time its own ignorant preachers were heaping up vouchers to ſupport it; and thoſe who might have produced a better ſet to refute it, having either never ſo much as heard of it, or thought it not worth their while to trouble themſelves about it, took no care to record the marks of impoſture, which, conſidering the extravagance of its pretenſions, could hardly eſcape the notice of ſenſible obſervers, had there been ſuch, who thought it worth their attending to. It grew, like a weed in ſome neglected ground, to a large ſize, before it was ſeen by any, who had eyes to ſee in things of ſuch a nature.

*Sbep.* Surely you muſt be miſtaken. At the time when Chriſtianity was introduced into the world, the *Jews* were a very ſenſible and knowing people, and lived intermixed with *Greeks* and *Romans*, whoſe underſtandings had all the opportunities of being well cultivated, and enlightened, that could be expected in the moſt intelligent age of the world. The *Jews* were then in great expectation of a Meſſiah, and the *Romans* were alarmed at certain prophecies, importing, that the Eaſt was about to give a King to the whole world. When Chriſt appeared, his miracles made too great a noiſe, not to draw the attention of mankind; and the religion he preached with all imaginable boldneſs and freedom, ſo directly oppoſed the notions, ſo ſeverely reproved the vices, both of *Jews* and

*Gentiles*,

*Gentiles*, and drew after it ſo many followers, as could not fail to excite, not only the curioſity, but the reſentment of the world. Although the firſt preachers of Chriſtianity were men of mean condition, yet ſo great was their ſucceſs in making converts, ſome of whom were by no means in the lower claſs of mankind, that it was impoſſible for their adverſaries, the *Roman* and *Jewiſh* rulers, to be indifferent to the progreſs they were making. Our Saviour, and his Apoſtles, were arraigned, crucified, ſtoned, *&c.* inſomuch that the cauſe of Chriſtianity was pleaded before high-prieſts, governors, and kings. Nothing in the world was farther from being done in a corner. It was openly preached to the great cities in the world, and even in *Rome* itſelf as early as the reign of *Claudius*; and that the greateſt men in the world did not look upon it as an obſcure or inconſiderable buſineſs in that of *Nero*, is but too plain from the inhuman perſecution it underwent at that time. Now, Sir, had our religion betrayed itſelf by any primitive ſigns of impoſture, it is plain they could not have paſſed unnoticed, nor unrecorded, conſidering the adverſaries it had to deal with, whoſe power, policy, and malice, had they been helped out by the detection of only a few impoſtures, muſt infallibly have ſuppreſſed it in its very infancy. I hope, Sir, it will ſeem unneceſſary to vindicate the Deiſts from the charge of infidelity by any further arguments, ſince it hath already been ſufficiently proved, that they are believers of a very high claſs.

*Dech.* You will find it an hard matter, I believe, to draw any advantage to Chriſtianity from ſo ſingular a poſition, were it never ſo fully proved on the one ſide, and granted on the other; for if faith is ſo very firm a foundation to build on, in matters of this nature, as you repreſent it, we Deiſtical believers may, after all, perhaps with more ſafety truſt our cauſe to it, than you can do.

*Shep.* It was not in order to bring any argument from thence in favour of Revelation, that I endeavoured to prove the Deiſts to be believers; but that, after all their dealing in demonſtrations, and pretending to certainties, they might have the mortification to ſee themſelves ſtand-

ing at leaſt on no higher nor firmer ground, than their adverſaries, that is, on faith, a principle ſo long deſpiſed, and ſo ſeverely ridiculed by them all.

*Deeb.* Oh! but ſince you have ſo cleverly raiſed this ground under us, as well as yourſelves, to a level with demonſtration, we ſhall not for the future have ſo much reaſon to be aſhamed of it.

*Shep.* I have not raiſed it all ſo high. There is a part of it left for you to ſtand on, that is low and ſlippery enough. Your faith, when cloſely examined, will be found to have all the properties of a weak credulity, which you ſo contemptuouſly, and ſo unjuſtly, aſcribe to ours. You build it either on the ſuppoſed impoſſibility of facts, as eaſy to be performed, as it is for you to walk and ſpeak; or elſe on the oppoſition given to our religion by the moſt partial adverſaries, by the very worſt and cruelleſt of mankind, who have left you no teſtimony againſt its miracles, but their inhuman perſecutions, nor the leaſt argument againſt the purity of its doctrines, but ſuch as aroſe from the ſtupid abſurdity of their own principles, and the wild licentiouſneſs of their own vices. The oppoſition of ſuch men is ſo far from giving you any foundation to build on, that no one thing in the world can ſpeak ſo ſtrongly in behalf of Chriſtianity; for ſo great is the tenderneſs of human nature in the worſt of men, that they never chooſe to refute by the ſword, when they can do it by argument; and, beſides, this demonſtrates, that while the grounds of your faith were maintained by human power, thoſe of ours were ſupported by the Divine.

*Deeb.* And ſo yours is a Divine faith?

*Shep.* Yes, Sir, this alone is ſufficient to intitle it to that epithet; for nothing but the power of God could have upheld a religion againſt the aſſociation of all the policy, and power, and corruptions, of the world.

*Deeb.* But for all this oppoſition, given to your religion by the *Jews* and *Romans*, you have no other evidence, but the teſtimony of men; and therefore your faith is purely human.

*Shep.* Our faith is the ſame with that of the firſt Chriſtians, and therefore originally Divine. Altho', however,

ever, it ſhould be allowed, that we in theſe remoter ages have nothing elſe to found our faith on, but the teſtimony of men; yet this is rendered ſo full and clear, in reſpect to the prodigious progreſs of Chriſtianity in ſpite of perſecution, by what is left on record in the writings of enemies, as well as friends, that nothing of this nature can be more firm and certain, than the grounds of our faith. But once we are perſuaded, be it by what argument it will, that the New Teſtament is the word of God, our belief that God will make good to us the promiſes contained therein, is an act of truſt in, and dependence on God; and therefore merits the appellation of Divine faith. However, Sir, I am very far from granting you, that our faith concerning the truth of the Scriptures reſts intirely on the teſtimony of men. Thoſe writings are, on all hands, allowed, and known to be very antient, more antient by far, than many events foretold in them. Now the completion of ſuch prophecies, as relate to theſe events, is a late, a preſent atteſtation, given by Providence, to the truth and genuineneſs of thoſe writings; and therefore, on this ſcore, our faith, relying on the teſtimony of God, is a Divine faith.

*Dech.* But you Chriſtians, before the publication of a late treatiſe *(a)*, had a ſurer way of proving your faith to be Divine, namely, from the atteſtation given to it by the inward workings of the Holy Ghoſt upon your own minds. This, however, you do not inſiſt on now, not only becauſe that treatiſe hath bantered you out of a pretence ſo bold and groundleſs, but becauſe ſuch continual inſpirations, being known only to yourſelves, cannot be urged as proofs to us.

*Shep.* You wholly miſtake the matter. We to this day actually inſiſt on the reality of the thing.

*Cunn.* Enthuſiaſts do; but men of ſenſe have long ſince diſclaimed theſe extraordinary convictions and experiences.

*Shep.* Men of ſenſe then have diſclaimed the Scriptures; for in them we are told, *that by grace we are ſaved thro' faith; and that not of ourſelves; it is the gift of God.* The external teſtimony given to our religion, is ſufficient



(a) Chriſtianity not founded on argument.

to excite an hiſtorical faith in the worſt of men, and even in devils; but this faith is only a foundation for fears, not for a new life and converſation, nor for the comfortable hope of an happy immortality. A lively, operative, and effectual faith, is never found, but where the Spirit of God hath raiſed it by his immediate grace and aſſiſtance. After faith hath taken poſſeſſion of the underſtanding, ſomething further is neceſſary to urge it home upon the heart, in order to give it a ſufficient aſcendency over the will and affections. Now this is the work of God only, *without whom we can do nothing.*

*Dech.* Do you not look upon the effectual faith you ſpeak of, as the only ſpring of a good life, and the only inſtrument of your ſalvation?

*Shep.* I do.

*Dech.* How then can your good actions be deemed virtuous, or held rewardable, ſince, in reſpect to the faith that produces them, you are but mere machines, moved and acted on by the Divine power?

*Shep.* We lay no ſtreſs on the merit of our good actions, nor are we ſo preſumptuous as to claim a reward from God; we only hope for his mercy. However, as we do not hold the grace of God to be irreſiſtible, if we have any thing to recommend us in his ſight, it is our yielding up the reluctant motions of a corrupt and degenerate heart to the dictates of his Holy Spirit. As often as we do this, and, in conſequence of it, betake ourſelves to a life of piety and virtue, we demonſtrate to all, who know us, the preſence and power of God within us; for a good life is a miracle, exceeding the ſtrength of man, and to be hoped for only from the hand of God. Thus, Sir, every good Chriſtian can as fully prove to others, as ſatisfy himſelf, that the Divine Being is both *the author and finiſher of his faith.*

*Dech.* After all, he is a ſtrange ſort of a good man, whoſe goodneſs is not his own.

*Shep.* He is a much better man, who will ſuffer himſelf to be made good by another, than he, who, having no goodneſs of his own growth, will ſuffer none to be grafted or planted in him.

*Dech.*

*Dech.* Whether we ſuppoſe the happineſs of another life to be the mere effect of faith, or to follow the good actions produced by faith, the ſuppoſition will be equally abſurd. All actions are to be eſtimated by the principles and motives, from whence they proceed. The good actions of a Chriſtian proceeding from his faith only, and his faith neither proceeding from his choice, nor depending on his power, I cannot ſee how either the cauſe or effect can recommend him to God, who approves only of thoſe who are good by choice, and, we may preſume, will never condemn thoſe who are wicked only thro' a want of that faith, which he hath not given them.

*Shep.* He will never condemn any man for a want of that goodneſs which he hath not afforded him the means of. But when the evidence of an hiſtorical faith in Chriſtianity is beſtowed on any man, if he reſiſts that evidence, it is not to be expected, that God ſhould inſpire him with the more practical kind of faith, which can never be found, where the hiſtorical hath not firſt taken place.

*Dech.* If the hiſtorical evidence is ſufficient, it cannot be reſiſted; if it is not, we are in the right to reject it.

*Shep.* But whether it is or not, can never be known to any man, till he hath fairly and fully weighed that evidence. Moſt men have their faith in their own power, and find a way to believe as they pleaſe, becauſe they can turn away their minds from the evidence on the one ſide, and attend to that on the other; they can read ſuch books, and converſe with ſuch perſons, as lean the ſame way with themſelves; and, if they ſhould at any time do otherwiſe, the evidence for a diſagreeable perſuaſion, being received with ſome averſion, hath little or no effect. There is nothing more common than to find men deaf to all arguments that thwart their intereſts or pleaſures, and yielding an eaſy aſſent to ſuch as fall in with either. Now, as thinking under ſuch a byaſs is certainly vicious, ſo thinking with an honeſt regard to truth only is as undoubtedly virtuous. But if an article of faith is propoſed, the nature and tendency of which are calculated to promote virtue, to allow the evidence of that article of faith its full weight, is virtuous in an higher ſenſe; and to refuſe a due attention to it, or to

reſiſt it, in caſe it is ſufficient, is, we muſt own, criminal in a very high degree. If the faith of a real Chriſtian leads him to virtue, and if that faith is in ſome meaſure the effect of his own choice, his faith is itſelf a virtue. If, on the other hand, the faith of a Libertine is at all choſen by himſelf, and tends in the leaſt to make him wicked, then his faith is not only or ſimply an error of his judgment, but alſo the reigning vice of his heart. Conſidered as an error, it is ſo groſs, ſo ſuperſtitious an exceſs of faith, that I cannot help adviſing thoſe who are addicted to it, as the beſt means to preſerve the reputation of good ſenſe, which they claim, to a little more incredulity. Nothing lays a man ſo open to all manner of impoſition, as a ſtrong faith erected on a weak foundation. Conſidered as a vice, I forbear to expatiate on it, being unwilling to give offence, and not knowing how far what I ſhould ſay might concern the perſons, who have done me the honour of this viſit.

*Dech.* Do you really imagine we Deiſts have no principles to make us virtuous, becauſe we reject the fictitious or compulſory principles of revelation?

*Shep.* Your creed may contain other articles of faith, better founded than this we have been conſidering. As, no doubt on't, you think it does, will you be ſo good, Sir, as to give us it at large? This act of condeſcenſion might afford us an occaſion to enter more fully into the points already conſidered, and alſo to handle ſome others of no leſs importance. The Deiſts, and indeed the Libertines of all degrees and denominations, are accuſed as men of dark and deep deſigns, who artfully attack the principles of other men, and ſtill more artfully conceal their own, ſeldom declaring themſelves by their writings in favour of any particular ſyſtem of opinions, and, when they do, ſeeming frequently to contradict one another. I have read over, with all the attention I was maſter of, the celebrated performances of my Lord *Shaftesbury*, Mr. *Collins*, Mr. *Toland*, Dr. *Tindal*, and ſome others of leſs note; and, to my great concern, altho' I can perceive what it is they would overturn, yet I cannot ſo eaſily and clearly diſcern what they intend to eſtabliſh, any further, than that they labour

to

to recommend the religion and law of nature, inſtead of Revelation; and that their readers may gather, in ſome few inſtances, what they maintain by what they deny. This obſcurity, proceed it from whence it will, is turned againſt them by their adverſaries, and aſcribed by ſome to the crudity or evil tendency of their tenets, by others, to artifice and chicane. Now I think it concerns them much to remove this unhandſome reflection by an open declaration of their opinions, both for truth's ſake, and their own. You will pleaſe to pardon me, Sir, if I be too preſuming in this requeſt.

*Dech.* As the Deiſts are far from being dogmatiſts, ſo no one of them attempts to impoſe his own notions on the reſt, or thinks himſelf obliged to follow thoſe of the greateſt man among them. They leave to others to think together in Churches and nations, and take the liberty each man to think freely for himſelf. Yet this doth not hinder them from harmonizing in main matters; and thoſe I will ſum up to you in a few words, their tenets being few and plain. And as to the artifice, with which they have been maliciouſly charged by their adverſaries, you will ſee ſufficient reaſons aſſigned for it in ſeveral paſſages of the *Characteriſtics*, and in *Chriſtianity as old as the creation*. Riveted prejudices cannot be beaten down by regular attacks; nor can the oppoſite opinions be introduced, without ſome diſguiſe. Beſides, nobody, you know, would care to riſque his own ſafety with a ſet of perſecuting antagoniſts, who are ready, on all occaſions, to argue with us from acts of parliament, and to call us to an uncouth ſort of diſputations before courts of judicature, where bigotry often preſides on the bench, and always reigns in both the boxes.

*Shep.* You are very obliging, Sir; and in my opinion do more honour to Deiſm, by frankly telling us what it is, than he who thinks it wants art, either to conceal or inſinuate it.

*Dech.* Sir, it was not becauſe the Deiſts were aſhamed of their principles, that they choſe to introduce them with ſo much addreſs, and under the colour of more received notions. A little art was neceſſary to render old prejudices diſagreeable, and take away the ſtrange-

neſs of new truths. But now that people do, generally ſpeaking, lean rather to our ſide, we make leſs ſcruple of declaring what we hold, and begin to open our ſyſtem by degrees.

## *The Deiſtical Creed.*

1. THE Deiſts maintain, that the light of nature is ſufficient to diſcover to every man, without inſtruction, all that is neceſſary or expedient for him, as a moral agent, to know *(a)*.

2. By this light every man perceives there is a God *(b)*, that is, a being of infinite goodneſs, wiſdom, juſtice, mercy, power, who is eternal, immutable, and perfect; who, being infinitely happy in himſelf, made nothing for his own ſake, and conſequently ſeeks no honour nor ſervice from his creatures, it being impoſſible for their actions, be they good or bad, to affect him in any ſenſe *(c)*; and who, as Governor of the world, takes care to make his will ſufficiently known to all his ſubjects *(d)*.

3. It appears by the light of nature, that the law, or the religion, by which God governs the world, and which is written in the heart of every man, is enforced, not by future and uncertain ſanctions, but by the preſent pleaſure ever attending on a good action, and the preſent remorſe inſeparably annexed to an evil one *(e)*; that to do good merely thro' hope of reward, and to abſtain from evil, merely through dread of puniſhment, hath neither virtue nor goodneſs in it *(f)*; that to act up to the dictates of that nature, which God hath given us, is the way to pleaſe God; and to do otherwiſe, is to affront, diſhonour, and diſpleaſe him *(g)*; that the natural light, which ſhines in the breaſts of all men, and enables them to diſcover the fitneſs of things, in which conſiſts the law of nature, is divine; and that this law

(*a*) Chriſtianity as old as the creation, chap. 1. 3. Shafteſ. Inquiry concerning virtue. (*b*) Chr. as old as the creation, chap. 1, 2. (*c*) Chap. 4, & 5. (*d*) Chap. 1, & 2. (*e*) Chap. 3. (*f*) Chap. 14. (*g*) Chap. 3. 13, 14.

is eternal, and indiſpenſable, and binds the actions of God himſelf *(b)*.

4. The Deiſts maintain, that altho' the dictates of natural religion are univerſal, and plain to all men, yet, ſince men have been led away from them by craft and ſuperſtition, it is neceſſary to reduce them to the light of nature again by diſcourſes oral and written *(i)*. But, however,

5. As the more knowing kind of men may do this for the more ignorant, there is no neceſſity, nor even the leaſt occaſion, for calling in miracles and divine revelations for this purpoſe; and therefore they deny the reality of any revelation *(k)*.

Here is an amiable and glorious ſyſtem of principles. In this all ſuperſtition, and prieſtcraft, and tyranny over the minds and opinions of mankind, are laid aſide. In this the Deity is truly repreſented, not as in your ſcheme of religion, full of wrath, indignation, jealouſy, impoſing arbitrary and uſeleſs commands on free and rational beings, and placing his honour and glory in ſeverely exacting obedience to ſuch impoſitions; but full of lenity and indulgence to the infirmities of his creatures. In the next place, here is a law, not depending upon authority and traditions, not darkened by hyperbolical and figurative expreſſions, not mutilated by interpolations, corruptions, and imperfect or wrong tranſlations, not capable of being explained away by arbitrary, or ſplit into oppoſite and contradictory doctrines by various and fanciful, interpretations, but written on the heart of every man in capital letters. Place a man in what circumſtances you pleaſe, and thoſe circumſtances ſhall ſuggeſt his duty to him. The whole creation is his teacher, and the relations and fitneſſes of things are his ſtanding monitors. He thinks for himſelf, and becomes his own caſuiſt, divine, and prieſt, without either expence or trouble. The virtue of individuals, and the peace and happineſs of ſocieties, are not built by this ſyſtem on a mere belief of future rewards and puniſhments, but on

*(b)* Chap. 13. *(i)* Chap. 8. *(k)* Chap. 7. For this ſee the whole book, and all other Deiſtical writings.

rewards enjoyed, and puniſhments inflicted, by the conſcience of every man, immediately upon his doing a good or evil action. This diſpenſation, far from being partial, like ſome other pretended ones, is communicated univerſally to all ages and nations; *its ſound is gone out into all lands, and its words unto the ends of the world.* It is to reduce mankind to this univerſal and natural law, it is to turn away their eyes from falſe and foreign lights, and fix them on this internal illumination, that the great philoſophers of this age do labour in their writings and converſations with a force of reaſon, and a ſublimity of ſoul, which the whole *Helvetic* body of thoſe who militate in the cauſe of revelations are ſtrangers to.

*Shep.* You have almoſt perſuaded me to be in love with Deiſm.

*Dech.* Almoſt! Why, *Shepherd*, I know you are a man of ſenſe, and therefore can hardly take you for any other than a real Deiſt in your heart, altho' your craft, and the ſubſiſtence you earn by it, compel you to profeſs the contrary.

*Shep.* Your compliment to my underſtanding, Sir, coſts me too much, in point of ſincerity, to be received. I am not yet a Deiſt, nor can the moſt rapid torrent of eloquence or wit carry me down with it to Deiſm, unleſs its principles are ſupported by cloſe and convincing arguments. If you can bring ſuch in its favour, you will then have the honour of converting to it an honeſt and candid inquirer after truth.

*Dech.* Would you really profeſs yourſelf a Deiſt, if you were thoroughly convinced of the truth and ſolidity of our principles?

*Shep.* You know, Sir, as well as any-body, how little I have to hinder me from making ſuch a profeſſion, did it appear to go againſt my conſcience no more than it does againſt my worldly intereſt. You yourſelf would take care your convert ſhould not die a martyr to your principles, merely for want of neceſſaries.

*Dech.* Your preſent income of thirty-four pounds a year, as you intimate, ought not to tie you to diſingenuous profeſſions; and it would be very hard, if I could not provide for an honeſt fellow of my own making, at a better

better rate than that. If all other expedients failed, I could procure or purchaſe you a much better living than this, ſurely, which you might leave to the care of ſome ſorry curate, and ſpend the remainder of your days in the enjoyment of the town, and my table, and in writeing, as ſome very ingenious Divines, whom I could name, have done, in defence of ſuch doctrines as ſeem to put Chriſtianity on a new and clearer footing; but tend, in the concluſion, intirely to overturn it.

*Shep.* Whether you are in jeſt or earneſt, this, I am afraid, would ſeem ſomewhat baſe and diſingenuous; though, now I think on't, if I could once heartily cloſe with the principles you recommend, I ſhould probably make but little ſcruple or difficulty of uſing ſome art in the ſupport of opinions ſo ſoothing and beneficial to me.

*Dech.* Ah Parſon! you are very ſly. However, I am ready to defend the Deiſtical Creed againſt all your objections, and ſhall leave your future conduct to your own diſcretion. But as this defence will take up a good deal of time, are you willing we ſhould paſs a few mornings together for ſo good a purpoſe?

*Temp.* O, by all means. Mr. *Shepherd* does not ſeem to be ſo diffident of his cauſe as to decline it. If I was well enough acquainted with the gentleman to aſk a favour, I would beg his compliance with this overture, as a ſingular kindneſs to me.

*Shep.* Sir, I do moſt readily agree to it, both for your ſatisfaction, and own information.

*The End of the Firſt* DIALOGUE.

DIALOGUE

# DIALOGUE II.

DECHAINE, TEMPLETON, | CUNNINGHAM, SHEPHERD.

*Shep.* GEntlemen, I am very glad to ſee you here ſo early. It is, however, matter of ſurprize to me, that you ſhould be abroad at this hour, when ſome others of your rank are but going to bed.

*Dech.* I have been always an early riſer in the country: in town I am a conformiſt.

*Temp.* For my part, I am never ſo chearful as the day I riſe betimes. Lying long in bed relaxes the ſpring both of body and mind. As early hours in the morning are impoſſible without early hours over-night, and as moſt of our exceſſes are committed by candle-light, I do not know any thing that would contribute more to virtue, than a rule, or ſome call of buſineſs, that could rouſe one every day at five or ſix in the morning. I had formerly a ſettled prejudice againſt poſitive duties; but the great ſervice, that might be drawn from ſuch a duty for this purpoſe, reconciles me a little to inſtitutions of that nature; ſo that I begin to doubt whether we do not really ſtand in need of them, and, in particular, to wiſh we were obliged by ſufficient authority to riſe always at five in the morning. It would deliver us from a cuſtom infinitely prejudicial to health and virtue, and give us a longer and an happier life. I honour him much who ſaid, *He that lengthens his nights ſhortens his days.*

*Dech.* When you make a revelation, *Templeton*, you may take care to put in this new poſitive inſtitution; and that you will not in time become a prophet, or a revealer, I am by no means certain. You was ſeized with ſome ſlight ſymptoms of enthuſiaſm in this very place on *Tueſday* laſt; and they ſeem to grow upon you ſo faſt, that

that I am really not altogether free from apprehenſions of a new *Templetonian Teſtament* or *Diſpenſation*. Virtue conſiſts not in riſing either late or early, nor in any artificial methods of managing ourſelves, but in following nature, whoſe light is ſufficient, according to the firſt article of our creed, to diſcover to every man, without inſtruction or inſtitution, all that is neceſſary for him, as a moral agent, either to know or practiſe.

*Shep.* Will you be ſo good, Sir, as to tell me in what the light of nature conſiſts?

*Dech.* It conſiſts in two things, *ſentiment* and *reaſon*. By ſentiment I mean, firſt, that impreſſion made on the heart of every man, by which he is naturally led to ſeek his own good, and to preſerve himſelf; ſecondly, that love of the ſexes, by which they are prompted to propagate and preſerve the ſpecies; thirdly, that *ſtorge* by which the parents are moved to cheriſh and preſerve their offſpring; fourthly, that benevolence, by which one human creature is inclined to benefit and preſerve another; and laſtly, that perception of beauty in a good, and of deformity in a bad, action, which every man feels in himſelf. By reaſon I mean that divine faculty of the mind, by which all men are enabled to judge and direct themſelves in the choice of ſuch means, as are neceſſary to bring about the ends ſuggeſted to them by their natural ſentiments, to decide between them according to the fitneſſes of things, when they interfere, and to reſtrain them within due bounds, when at any time they tend to exceſs or irregularity. This, Sir, is what I mean by the light or law of nature, implanted in the breaſts of all men, and adequate to all their moral purpoſes. As every one muſt acknowlege there is ſuch a law within him, independent of all inſtruction, there can be no need of a revelation. It was in full confidence of forcing you to own this, that I ſuffered you to carry your arguments, relating to the hiſtory of miracles and reſurrections, to their full length, knowing well, that as ſoon as the natural and univerſal revelation came to be conſidered and demonſtrated, all your talk about the proofs of a particular diſpenſation, and the neceſſity of it, would come to the ground. Pray, Sir, do you own the

the clearneſs of this law, as I have deſcribed it, within yourſelf?

*Shep.* I do not.

*Dech.* You do not! Then you deny, I ſuppoſe, you have any deſire to preſerve yourſelf, to propagate your ſpecies, to cheriſh your offspring, to do good to mankind, to cultivate virtue, and extirpate vice from your mind; you deny the exiſtence of a rational faculty within you; you deny, in a word, that you are a man.

*Shep.* I deny none of theſe things; but I doubt indeed whether any, or all of theſe, can be properly called a law.

*Dech.* Do they not oblige and bind the actions of men? And is not that which binds the actions of moral agents, a law?

*Shep.* Does the law of nature conſiſt in ſentiment, or in reaſon?

*Dech.* In both.

*Shep.* So far as it conſiſts in ſentiment, the brutes, having thoſe inſtincts, which you call ſentiments, are moral agents, as well as men.

*Dech.* By no means. Brutes are not ſtruck with a moral ſenſe of good and evil, as men are. Brutes are deſtitute of reaſon and choice, and therefore their inſtincts are not laws; but man being directed by his reaſon to act in conformity to his ſentiments, and being free to obey or diſobey its dictates, thoſe ſentiments become a law to him.

*Shep.* No ſenſe, perception, or inſtinct, can be called moral, till ſome higher faculty injoins obedience to it as a duty. It is reaſon therefore in which the law of nature conſiſts; for men are only accountable for their actions, ſo far as they are rational creatures; and that man, who is wholly deprived of reaſon, is, for the time, neither a moral, nor an accountable agent. But pray, Sir, have all men one and the ſame law of nature? Or hath every man a diſtinct natural law of his own?

*Dech.* All men have the ſame natural law. The ſentiments I mentioned, and the faculty of reaſon, are the ſame in every man.

*Shep.*

*Shep.* As men are to deal with one another, and live in community, they ought certainly to have but one univerſal law; for if this man were to act by one law, and that by another, it is eaſy to ſee, that great miſchiefs and claſhings would ariſe from thence. You know better than I do, that no trial can be had, nor a judge determine in any cauſe, but upon a common law, which parties on both ſides muſt ſubmit to. If men had different laws, that which is right by one man's law, might be wrong by another's, and conſequently right or wrong could never be diſtinguiſhed. Now, Sir, it is a common obſervation, that the ſentiments and reaſonings of mankind are very different. Altho' all men have thoſe ſentiments you ſpeak of, and reaſon too, yet this ſentiment is ſtronger in one man, and that in another; and reaſon, which is clear and ſtrong in ſome men, is weak and ill-informed in others. Hence it comes to paſs, that Mr. *Templeton* may do a thing, which you think right, and I wrong, tho' both you and I are perfectly unprejudiced in the matter. In this reſpect, therefore, the mere ſentiments and reaſons of men cannot be a perfect law. Were it not for this great diverſity, the breaſt of every man might be appealed to, as containing the common law, and no judge could ever miſtake in his decrees. But as the contrary is evident to experience, mankind are forced to form themſelves into ſocieties, and determine what ſhall be the common law of all the members.

*Dech.* Yet if reaſon were not able to direct, the ſociety could frame no common law, capable of anſwering the end.

*Shep.* Altho' it ſhould mix unjuſt with equitable laws, which all ſocieties have done, partly by miſtake, and partly with deſign; yet thoſe who are to be judged by thoſe laws, are in a better condition, than if every man were left to be his own lawgiver.

*Dech.* When you ſay, this or that law of ſociety is unjuſt, is it not reaſon that tells you ſo?

*Shep.* I cannot tell whether it be or not. My reaſon ſays one thing, that of the ſociety ſays another; and two ſocieties are as apt to differ, as two men. But if reaſon were

were never ſo uniform in all men, yet I cannot ſee what authority it hath to ſet up for a legiſlator. If any man ſhould deny its authority, and act againſt reaſon; and, as it often happens, be powerful enough to defend himſelf againſt all the conſequences of ſuch a procedure; what could reaſon do to enforce or vindicate its laws? A law is a rule of action impoſed on a free and moral agent, by a known ſuperior, whoſe authority cannot be queſtioned, with a reward or penalty, or both, annexed; and if the law is perfect, it muſt be juſt, and its ſanctions muſt be adequate to the juſt and good end propoſed by it. Be pleaſed to ſhew, Sir, that the dictates of mere reaſon are ſupported by ſuch authority, and by rewards and puniſhments of weight and cogency equal to the ſecurity and happineſs of all mankind.

*Dech.* To act againſt nature is ſhocking to a rational being, and therefore the authority of nature is ſufficient. As to the rewards and puniſhments annexed to the law of nature, they too ſeem to be ſufficient. No man can be more ſurely rewarded for a good action, than he who hath his reward in his own hand, and can beſtow it as plentifully on himſelf as he pleaſes, in that greateſt of all pleaſures, the pleaſure of doing good. Nor can any man be more terribly puniſhed, than by being left, after doing an evil action, to the ſevere ſtings of his own guilty conſcience.

*Shep.* Every man therefore is ſubject to the law of his own heart, and that law is founded on the mere authority of his own nature. He is likewiſe his own judge, rewarder, and puniſher. By this, which we may call the ſelf-ſufficient ſcheme, a man muſt either be ſubject to no law of nature, that is, in any proper ſenſe of the word law; or elſe he muſt be ſuperior to himſelf; for every law is the will of ſome ſuperior impoſed upon one, who is inferior and ſubject.

*Dech.* Are not the nature and reaſon of a man ſuperior to his will and paſſions, and every thing elſe about him, that can be ſaid to act? There is certainly in every man a ſuperior part that impoſes, and an inferior that obeys, the law.

*Shep.*

*Shep.* I find the ſelf-ſufficient ſcheme is more perfect than I imagined. Every man, it ſeems, hath a legiſlator, and ſubjects, with a court of juſtice, and executioners, in his own breaſt.

*Dech.* Yes; every one of us is a moral, as well as a phyſical, microcoſm. Did you never hear of the *forum conſcientiæ?*

*Shep.* I have; but I imagined, till now, it had only been a metaphorical forum, or court of juſtice. It hath been received as a maxim by ſome, that the will obeys and executes the laſt reſult of the underſtanding or reaſon. Whenever therefore a man does wrong, the legiſlator hath been deficient, and the law unjuſt; whereas you and *Tindal* maintain, that the law of nature is perfect, and univerſally right and clear.

*Dech.* But, good Sir, that maxim is no maxim with me. I ſay, a man may act againſt nature and reaſon. If he might not, he could never be guilty of a culpable action; for all that is required of any man is, to act up to the dictates of his reaſon, and that nature which God hath given him.

*Shep.* When the reward annexed to the natural law is conferred on any man for doing well, or the puniſhment inflicted on him for doing ill, is the man, properly ſpeaking, ſaid to be rewarded or puniſhed?

*Dech.* No doubt on't he is.

*Shep.* It is not then his will or paſſions, or the active part of him alone, that is ſaid to be rewarded or puniſhed, but the whole man; and when he acts againſt the laws of nature, poor nature herſelf, who hath rightly dictated the law to him, is puniſhed together with the more peccant part. I really pity that unhappy legiſlatrix, who, without any fault of hers, muſt, as often as her ſubjects diſobey her, come down from her tribunal, and ſuffer with them under the hand of her own executioner. The conſtitution of this internal court of conſcience is ill regulated, in my opinion. I find there are great diſorders in the moral microcoſm, as well as in the natural, and, what is worſe, great injuſtice. However, I muſt own, it is a great alleviation of this grievance, that the puniſhments which nature undergoes on ſuch

ſuch occaſions, being inflicted only by her own directions, are very gentle. Beſides, if ſhe be ſo corrupt and ill-diſpoſed, as ſome ſay ſhe is, it is little matter what ſhe ſuffers. It ſeems very ſtrange, Mr. *Dechaine*, that you, who I ſuppoſe cannot conceive the poſſibility of a perſonal diſtinction in the Divine Nature, ſhould nevertheleſs have found out a ſufficient number of perſonalities in one individual man, to furniſh a court of conſcience. If the mind of a man is ſo populous, the pooreſt beggar may ſay We, as well as the King.

*Dech.* You have a ſtrange knack at allegory.

*Shep.* Nay, it was of your own ſtarting; and, beſides, you did not make an allegory of it altogether, but ſomewhat worſe. In order to give authority to your law of nature, you found out a ruler and ſubjects in the ſame man. But one faculty in a man can never be lawgiver to another; nor can the duty and obligation, lying upon any man, ariſe out of, and terminate in, himſelf. He muſt be ſubject to ſome higher power, if he is to be governed at all.

*Dech.* If there is any defect in the authority of the natural law, it is abundantly ſupplied by the authority of ſociety. If each man contains not a perfect moral world within himſelf, ſociety, into which he is by natural inclination, and I had almoſt ſaid by neceſſity, obliged to enter, is a perfect body, and ſufficiently authorizes the laws of nature and reaſon.

*Shep.* This is giving up the whole matter in queſtion, and flying from a natural to an artificial and factitious authority. If the law of nature is a perfect law, it muſt have a natural authority, and not a borrowed one.

*Dech.* Society is neceſſary and natural, and therefore the authority it derives on the law of nature is purely natural.

*Shep.* I thought *Tindal*, and the reſt of you, had maintained, that every man hath a perfect law of nature in his own breaſt, whether in ſociety, or out of it, go whither he will. I have alſo hitherto imagined, that all the abettors of the ſelf-ſufficient ſcheme had founded ſociety on the law of nature, inſtead of ſending the law of nature to borrow its baſis from civil ſociety. For my part,

part, I think it evident to demonſtration, that ſociety cannot at all ſubſiſt, if its ſeveral members be not ſubject to ſome authority and law, previous to thoſe of ſociety. And as to the inward uprightneſs and virtue of individuals, ſociety, which hath to do with nothing more than our outward actions, can never provide for them. The magiſtrate bears no rule over the conſciences of men, into which he cannot dive; and therefore, unleſs virtue, contrary to all your maxims, conſiſts in mere exterior conduct, allured or forced by civil rewards and puniſhments, the political Leviathan can afford no aſſiſtance towards the ſincere and real goodneſs of his members, and is of conſequence but an huge body, without ſoul or ſtrength. You ſay, I think, mankind cannot ſubſiſt out of ſociety.

*Dech.* If we comprehend families in the number of ſocieties, I believe they cannot.

*Shep.* Nay, for that matter, families cannot ſubſiſt without the protection of greater ſocieties; for as children depend abſolutely on families for ſubſiſtence, ſo do families on kingdoms and commonwealths for peace, ſecurity, property, life, and every thing. Pray, can ſociety ſubſiſt without laws?

*Dech.* No, its members muſt know by what conſtitutions or cuſtoms they are to regulate their actions, and what is lawful or penal; or they can never anſwer either the public ends of ſociety, or their own private purpoſes of entering into it.

*Shep.* Magiſtrates too ſeem to be as neceſſary as laws; for altho' the laws were never ſo good and juſt, they could not execute themſelves.

*Dech.* I grant it.

*Shep.* As to the lower magiſtrates, we need not inquire about their qualifications, becauſe we may preſume they will take care to accommodate their diſpoſitions and conduct to the mind of the Supreme But how, think you, ought he to be qualified, who is to be ſet at the head of ſociety?

*Dech.* The better to anſwer the ends of ſociety, he ought to be wiſe and juſt.

*Shep.*

*Shep.* So I think; becauſe the ill effects of folly or partiality in him will be ſeverely and extenſively felt among his ſubjects. If the inferior magiſtrates find him to be weak or fooliſh, they will impoſe on his blindneſs; and if they think him unjuſt, they will take the liberty to be ſo too, and hope for his connivance; and on both accounts will be apt to abuſe ſuch portions of his power, as may happen to be lodged in their hands. The people too will always either deſpiſe ſuch a magiſtracy, and run into rebellions and inſurrections, or they will by intereſt made with the magiſtrates, by bribes, and evaſions of the laws, by parties and factions, endeavour to reſtrain the common advantages of the ſociety, each man, or party of men, to themſelves. By theſe means good men will be oppreſſed, and bad men advanced and enriched, contrary to the well-being and ends of ſociety.

*Dech.* This is all very true; but I think it is little to our preſent purpoſe.

*Shep.* You will be of another opinion very ſoon. The better intelligence the ſupreme magiſtrate hath of what is doing among his ſubjects, and the more perfectly he underſtands the rules of government, you will grant, I believe, that he will be the better qualified to ſuperintend the public affairs.

*Dech.* I will.

*Shep.* For my part, I think it evidently neceſſary, he ſhould be perfectly well acquainted with the principles and conduct of all his under-officers, and of his ſubjects; for if he is not, he can never, in any ſort, keep either the one or the other in their duty. The greateſt irregularities and enormities may be committed by both, without being either animadverted upon, or brought within a poſſibility of being puniſhed. Crimes not cognizable are not puniſhable. Again, if he be not moſt ſtrictly and ſteadily juſt, it will be little matter how knowing or wiſe you ſuppoſe him to be, becauſe he may oppreſs the innocent, and promote the wicked, or ſuffer others to do it, notwithſtanding the higheſt and moſt perfect knowlege you can imagine him veſted with. As to his power, it muſt be proportionable to his wiſdom and

and juſtice, or thoſe qualifications will be uſeleſs. He muſt be able ſufficiently to reward every good action, and puniſh every ill one, or he will never be fit to fill the place of a ſupreme magiſtrate; becauſe otherwiſe virtue might go unrewarded, and vice unpuniſhed, tho' he were never ſo well appriſed of both, and never ſo deſirous of chaſtiſing the one, and encouraging the other. Now it is not only neceſſary to the very being and poſſibility of ſociety, that he ſhould be wiſe, juſt, and powerful, in this high degree; but it is alſo neceſſary, that his under-officers and ſubjects ſhould firmly believe him to be ſo, becauſe their behaviour will not be regulated by his unknown qualifications, but by their opinion or knowlege of them. A bad man in power, who thinks he may eſcape unpuniſhed for his male-adminiſtration, thro' the ignorance, injuſtice, or weakneſs of his ſupreme, will turn that portion of power he is poſſeſſed of, directly againſt the good of ſociety; nay, he will become, in his own opinion, effectually ſupreme, inaſmuch as he will not expect to be called to account for his conduct. That man, who does not believe he is to account in the ſevereſt manner for the uſe and application of his power, ought never to be truſted with any power, becauſe he will endeavour to draw all the advantages of the ſociety to himſelf, and his inſtruments, and turn all its weight and ſtrength againſt thoſe who thwart his uſurpations. How can mankind be more unhappy, than under a fallible, or I ſhould rather ſay, a corrupt and wicked adminiſtration, that ſtands in awe of no ſuperior, that is under a lawleſs power? As to the ſubjects, if they do not look upon themſelves as accountable to ſuch wiſdom as there is no hiding from, ſuch juſtice as there is no byaſſing, and ſuch power as there is no reſiſting or eſcaping, they will never pay any more than an outward reſpect to the civil power, and that only when it is too ſtrong for them. Whenever the magiſtracy can be reſiſted, or the truth, on which right and juſtice depend, concealed, or the laws evaded, which you know may be done in moſt caſes, they will follow their own private ends, without any regard to thoſe of the public. There is, in ſhort, no enormity, which

which under the influence of a perſuaſion, that the adminiſtration is at all defective in wiſdom, juſtice, or power, they will not be ready to commit. Thus, Sir, I think it appears, that a community conſiſting of magiſtrates and ſubjects, who do not think their ſupreme governor qualified as aforeſaid, is but a rope of ſand, and, inſtead of meriting the name of ſociety, ſhould rather be called a confederacy againſt all the rights of men, all the comforts of life, and all the ends of civil government. Pray, Mr. *Dechaine*, is there any juſtice, peace, or ſafety to be expected in civil ſociety, without ſuch tryals in capital and other caſes, as are brought on in our courts of law and juſtice?

*Dech.* No.

*Shep.* Is it not by thoſe tryals, that the benefits and puniſhments of ſociety are applied?

*Dech.* It is.

*Shep.* Can there be any ſuch thing as a tryal without evidence?

*Dech.* It is impoſſible.

*Shep.* Can thoſe, who on tryals are to bring verdicts, or pronounce decrees, have perſonal knowlege of the merits in every point diſputed before them?

*Dech.* They can have it in few or none.

*Shep.* How then are they to come at information?

*Dech.* By the teſtimony of indifferent perſons, who know the caſe inquired into.

*Shep.* Can the judge or jury ſee into the hearts of witneſſes, and ſatisfy themſelves whether they are depoſing the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

*Dech.* No indeed.

*Shep.* If the witneſſes then are not firmly perſuaded, that he who holds the ſupreme power over them, can ſee into their hearts, is perfectly acquainted with the caſe they ſwear to, and is both juſt, and able to puniſh them in the moſt terrible manner for prevarication, they may depoſe a falſhood, and thereby fruſtrate the whole intention of the tryal.

*Dech.* God, I find, is your Supreme Magiſtrate.

*Shep.* Yes, it is God alone who can be ſupreme in a civil, as well as a phyſical ſenſe. No mortal, no Angel,

is able to fill that high ſtation. None but he, who is preſent at all tranſactions, to whom all hearts, tho' never ſo dark and manifold, are tranſparent, whoſe juſtice there is no byaſſing, and from whoſe power there is no eſcaping, againſt whom the grave itſelf is no defence; none but he can be an infallible and univerſal witneſs, a competent judge in all caſes, and a ſupreme governor. Society depends abſolutely on him, and all kingdoms and communities are but provinces of his univerſal kingdom. He is the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Judge of Judges. You ſought in vain for a law within yourſelf, and when you could not find an authority there, you had recourſe to ſociety for it; but ſociety could furniſh you with no other, than what it borrows from the author of its being, and the ſource of all power, *whoſe kingdom ruleth over all.* Now, Sir, I have three things to obſerve to you concerning what hath been ſaid. In the firſt place, if God were rightly and firmly believed in, by the under-magiſtrates and ſubjects of any community, the wiſdom, juſtice, and power of the Divine Head would derive themſelves in the chanel of that faith upon all the members of the public body, and make the whole extremely happy; and I may ſafely venture to ſay, that all the defects of civil ſociety, all the injuſtice, oppreſſion, rapine, rebellion, faction, all inteſtine ſtruggles for power, and all the civil wars, that ſhake or tear ſociety to pieces, ſpring only from a want of faith in God, and inattention to his ſuperintendence. Secondly, as God's kingdom reaches to all places, and comprehends all things, ſo it extends likewiſe to all times; and as he neither manifeſts what he knows of the ſecret virtues or vices of mankind, as he neither inflicts an adequate puniſhment on the latter, nor confers a full reward on the former, in this life, ſo there muſt be a time hereafter, when he will aſſemble all the members of his wide-extended dominion to judgment, and do ample juſtice on them all. Thirdly, as mankind cannot ſubſiſt out of ſociety, nor ſociety itſelf ſubſiſt without religion, I mean without faith in the infinite wiſdom, juſtice, and power of God, and a judgment to come, religion cannot be a falſhood. Is it poſſible, that all the hap-

happineſs of mankind, that the whole civil world, that peace, ſafety, juſtice, and truth itſelf, ſhould have nothing to ſtand on, but a lye? Is it to be ſuppoſed, that a God of infinite power could give the world no other foundation; or that a God of infinite truth and goodneſs could be obliged to help out his creation with deceit and fraud, and was able no otherwiſe to provide for the happineſs of all his rational creatures, but by a groſs and univerſal impoſture? Theſe things cannot be ſuppoſed, and therefore religion is, and muſt be, true.

*Temp.* I really think it a clear and irreſiſtible demonſtration; and as it is intirely new to me, I cannot withhold the pleaſure I know it will afford Mr. *Shepherd*, to hear me ſay, I think myſelf happy in the acquaintance of a man, who hath given me intire ſatisfaction on a point of the laſt importance to me.

*Dech.* Well; but as it is what I ſhould in a great meaſure have granted, without any difficulty, the Doctor needed not to have taken ſo great a compaſs in the proof of it. We Deiſts are far from denying religion, as you may ſee by our creed.

*Shep.* But you ſeem, Sir, to forget that you were for terminating your natural law in yourſelf, and carrying its authority no higher, than nature or ſociety. This made it neceſſary to ſhew the true ſource of all law, authority, and obligation.

*Dech.* The real matter in debate wants yet to be inquired into, namely, whether nature or reaſon cannot give us a right idea of God, and our dependence on him; for all you have ſaid, Mr. *Shepherd*, is only a proof of religion in general, whereas we are not at all diſputing, whether there is any true religion, or not, but whether there is any occaſion for revelation. Religion, on which ſo much depends, ought to be univerſal and clear; whereas no revelation can have either of thoſe properties. It may be materially altered or corrupted by the inventions, and intereſted views, it may be variouſly interpreted by the prejudices, and falſe reaſonings, and it may be wholly loſt by the negligence, of thoſe, through whoſe hands it ought to paſs to the reſt of the world. In matters of far leſs conſequence God hath afforded as means of knowlege, which are in no dan-

ger of being ill interpreted, or imperfectly tranſmitted, becauſe they ſpeak in a plain and intelligible language to every body. Is it to be ſuppoſed, that an infinitely wiſe God, who knows ſo well how to adapt the means to the end in all caſes, ſhould have given ſenſes to all men, by which they can eaſily diſtinguiſh objects, not only thoſe which are of ſome importance to them, but even ſuch as they are little, or not at all, concerned in, and reaſon to judge even in matters of curioſity; is it, I ſay, to be ſuppoſed, that he ſhould have left us to uncertain or defective means of knowing himſelf, ſince the happineſs of every individual, and conſequently of all communities, depends abſolutely on that knowlege? No man needs to be taught there is a God, who governs the world he hath made, with infinite goodneſs and power. He finds the idea of this great Being impreſſed by nature on his mind, and ſuggeſted to him by all her works. No deduction of reaſon, no idea of ſenſe, can be more clearly formed, or ſtrongly apprehended, by the ſoul of man, than the being of God, independent of all revelation and inſtruction. Accordingly we find, that all men in all nations believe in God; which had never been the caſe, if the idea of that Divine Being were not univerſally natural. Thus, Sir, it appears, that the religion or law of nature hath its authority from the light of nature, and is perfect, without the aid of revelation.

*Shep.* If it ſhould happen to be proved, that nature alone does not clearly ſuggeſt a right idea of God to us, it will follow, that revelation muſt do it, or we be deſtitute of it. And howſoever defective the methods of propagating this revelation may be, we are not now inquiring about them, but only whether, from the mere light of nature, every man hath a right idea of God; for my Lord *Shafteſbury* and you will own, that wrong ideas of God will hurt ſociety as much, if not more, than ignorance of him could do. Yet before we go any further, I muſt obſerve to you, that altho' the idea of God were derived from a revelation only vouchſafed to our common parents, that idea could never be wholly loſt or wanting to any of their poſterity. The idea of an infinitely great and glorious Creator and Governor,

once

once revealed, will ſtrike deep into the mind, and cannot be forgotten. The parent, who hath himſelf received this idea from revelation, cannot conceal it from his children, without a direct rebellion againſt his Maker, and the moſt ſenſeleſs ſort of cruelty to them. Upon the increaſe of mankind, if any parent ſhould neglect to tell his ſon there is a God, which however cannot be ſuppoſed, that ſon could not poſſibly fail of hearing it from others. An article of knowlege, on which all duty, all obligation, all law and juſtice, ſo neceſſarily depends, could not be a ſecret to him. All mankind, and the whole courſe of his dealings in the world, would be his inſtructors in this; and therefore, altho' we were to depend on revelation alone for our idea of God, yet no rational man, unleſs he were to grow up from his infancy, like a tree, on ſome mountain remote from his parents and all mankind, could poſſibly fail to have ſome idea or other of God. It is true, indeed, there is this objection to the ſuppoſition of our having the idea of God from revelation only, that ſome men may eaſily, and all men poſſibly, depart from the right idea, and, in proceſs of time, entertain a wrong notion of the Deity; but this, of which there but too many actual proofs, evidently demonſtrates to us, that we have no natural innate idea of God; for if we had, and that idea were as plain and ſtrong, as any idea of ſenſe, in all men, no mortal could ever entertain an abſurd or unworthy notion of him. All the falſe or abſurd theology in the world, proves inconteſtably to us, that every man hath not a right idea of the Divine nature from within himſelf; nay, I believe I may ſafely queſtion, whether any man hath it from the mere light of nature. Nothing can ſeem more ſtrange, than that the wiſeſt and moſt ſagacious of all men, I mean the philoſophers, ſhould have ſearched with all imaginable candour and anxiety for this idea, and ſearched in vain, if it had been impreſſed as clearly and ſtrongly on their own minds, as the idea of a tree, or any other common object of ſenſe. Do you really believe, Mr. *Dechaine*, that all knowlege, abſolutely neceſſary to the ſubſiſtence of man, muſt ſpring from the light of nature?

*Dech.* Moſt undoubtedly.

*Shep.* If a man and woman were created in full maturity of mind and body, with all their faculties and ſenſes in the higheſt natural perfection, would they be able to diſtinguiſh poiſonous from nutritious fruits?

*Dech.* I believe ſcarcely.

*Shep.* Would they be able to diſtinguiſh between the effects of walking over a plain and a precipice, till they had made a trial?

*Dech.* Hardly.

*Shep.* Would they know what pain, ſickneſs, and death are, having not yet ſeen an inſtance of the laſt, or felt the former?

*Dech.* They would not.

*Shep.* It ſeems then, that it is not neceſſary to our ſubſiſtence, to know what will preſerve or deſtroy life; for if it were, nature would teach the aforeſaid pair the difference between life and death, and between ſuch things as are fitted to preſerve the firſt, and thoſe that unavoidably bring on the laſt.

*Dech.* But nature, Sir, ſufficiently inſtructs us to act according to the natural fitneſſes of things, once they are known by experience; to avoid danger, pain, and death, together with their cauſes; and to deſire ſafety, to purſue pleaſure, to preſerve life, and to uſe the neceſſary means for theſe purpoſes, as ſoon as they are diſcovered.

*Shep.* This I grant; and natural reaſon teaches us to cloſe with the true notions of God and religion, as ſoon as they are found out. You ſpoke juſt now of acting according to the natural fitneſſes of things, once they are diſcovered by experience. Pray is it agreeable to your notions of God's goodneſs to imagine he would leave our firſt parents, on whoſe lives the being of all their poſterity depended, to experiments that might prove fatal to them? For my part, I am forced to believe he taught them the difference between life and death, between wholſome and poiſonous fruits, between walking over plains and precipices, with all other neceſſary points of knowlege, their natural ſenſes only ſupplying them with the mere ideas of things. The office of the ſenſes is to furniſh us with ideas; that of reaſon, to compare

those ideas, and form judgments out of them; and that of the instincts, sentiments, passions, appetites, &c. to give us desires towards that which is good, and aversions to that which is hurtful to us. But none of these, nor all of them together, can strike out any useful point of knowlege, till either experience or instruction have shewn us the natures, the fitnesses, and the differences of things. Now experience is too late an instructor in all things immediately and absolutely necessary to be known. We don't leave our children to the hazardous or dreadful tutorage of experience in such matters; and we may presume God, who is the tendereſt of all parents, would not leave his exposed to dangers, I should rather say, to certain ruin, for want of knowlege, which he placed them under the absolute necessity of deriving either from his instructions, or from trials of the most hazardous nature, some one or other of which could hardly fail to destroy them. Actions moral or immoral in the highest degree, to one who knows the tendency of those actions, and the law of God, are perfectly indifferent to a person unacquainted with that law; and, what is still more, before experience, or some other instructor, hath taught him the tendency of those actions, he knows neither the natural good or evil, fitness or unfitness of them. If the man already described saw the woman a drowning, let him love her never so tenderly, as he could neither be sensible of her danger, nor know how to relieve her, though stretching out his hand to her would be sufficient, it would be neither cruelty nor sin in him to let her sink. He might give her poison, or let a stone drop from a precipice on her head, if he were not told, that such an action would put her to excessive pain, or kill her, and if the evil of pain and death were not previously made known to him.

*Dech.* But supposing him well apprised, no mattter by what means, of the natural evil proceeding from such actions, would he not then abhor them?

*Shep.* He would; yet this abhorrence arising only from instinct, natural affection, or what you call sentiment, as it does in beasts, would be purely animal, and by no means either moral or religious, if he were not first con-

vinced, that he was to regulate his life by the dictates of ſentiment and reaſon, and to look upon thoſe dictates as the laws of God, by which he was to be judged. The propenſities and averſions of his own mind could never become laws to him, till he was once appriſed, that God made him, was his ſupreme Governor, had planted thoſe propenſities and averſions in him, and would be pleaſed or diſpleaſed with him, according as he acted conformably to, or inconſiſtently with them. If you ſhould find a printed paper, drawn up in the form of a ſtatute, and pretending to oblige you and all your countrymen to allow your wives a certain proportion of your fortunes yearly, to be diſpoſed of by them as they ſhould think proper; altho' you ſhould, thro' your great regard for your wife, judge the allowance reaſonable, yet you would never think yourſelf legally obliged to pay it to her, till you found the ſaid ſtatute had actually paſſed both houſes of parliament, and gained the royal aſſent. Beſides, if a man ſhould think himſelf under a moral obligation to obey all the propenſities and averſions of his own nature, as many of them are irregular, exceſſive, or vicious, he would quickly find himſelf ſubject to a moſt iniquitous law; or, if he did not, others, with whom he might happen to have dealings, would feel it to their coſt.

*Dech.* But would not reaſon, which is the governing principle in man, ſet the irregularities of the paſſions ſtrait, and diſtinguiſh between ſuch inclinations or averſions as are good, and thoſe that are evil?

*Shep.* I am afraid it would not, if every man were to reaſon and think for himſelf. All men do not reaſon alike. Some men reaſon weakly from right principles; others draw their premiſes from thoſe very paſſions that ought to be corrected or ſuppreſſed; and, what is as bad, reaſon doth not dictate with ſufficient authority; and conſequently cannot enforce obedience. She may judge of the fitneſs of a law, once it is given, and perſuade us to obey it; but ſhe can give no laws herſelf, as we have already ſeen. The mind of man is in itſelf a beautiful and convenient palace, with all the neceſſary furniture and utenſils in their proper places. At firſt its doors

doors and windows are ſhut up, all is dark within, and reaſon, its owner and inhabitant, lies faſt aſleep. But as ſoon as it is thrown open to the outward light, reaſon begins to rouſe by degrees, and look about it; yet knows not the uſes of the apartments, or the furniture, till it is taught their convenience and fitneſs. The architect inſtructs it in the uſes of ſuch as are from the beginning abſolutely neceſſary, and leaves it to exerciſe its ſagacity in finding out the more remote fitneſſes by degrees. He leads it to the windows, from whence he ſhews it the proſpect on all ſides, and gives it a juſt notion of its own ſituation, in reſpect to its neighbours, and the places from whence it is to bring its neceſſaries; he carries it up the ſtairs, and places it on the roof, from whence he ſhews it the things above, and deſcribes the heavens to it. He demonſtrates to it, that all the light it enjoys is derived from the illuſtrious orb that ſhines on high, and ſheds its beams around, and thro' all the palace.

*Dech.* If we muſt talk in allegory, I am of opinion this palace is well enlightened from within, and that its inhabitant hath an excellent lamp, by which he can direct himſelf thro' all the apartments, and view all the furniture; nor is he ſo ſtupid as not eaſily to diſcover their uſes, without the help of a guide, and an inſtructor, to explain his own dwelling to him.

*Shep.* Pray, Sir, whence did you receive the idea you have of God? Was it from the mere light of nature, from the internal lamp, or from inſtruction?

*Dech.* It was from inſtruction; but my teachers might have ſaved themſelves the pains, becauſe I ſhould have had it, without their documents.

*Shep.* Did you ever know, or even hear of, any perſon who had an idea of God, without ever having been taught it?

*Dech.* No; for the good old people, our parents, are ſo officious in this reſpect, as to teach us their own notions of God as ſoon as it is poſſible for us to apprehend them.

*Shep.* They teach you then, I ſuppoſe, what you knew before; but I ſhould think they would never have given themſelves the trouble, had they perceived by your in-

fant acts of devotion, or by your expreſſions when you came to the uſe of ſpeech, that you had a right idea of God from the firſt moment of your appearance in the world.

*Dech.* I do not ſay, Sir, that infants perceive in themſelves an idea of God. They have no ſort of occaſion for that idea, till they grow up a little, and begin to be capable of duty and obligation; and then it would ſhew itſelf in them, altho' nobody had ever ſuggeſted it to them.

*Shep.* This you are not ſure of, becauſe you never knew nor heard an inſtance of it in your life. And to ſay it would be ſo, contrary to the ſenſe of all mankind, who think it neceſſary to imprint this idea on the minds of children by inſtruction, without any other grounds for your opinion, but mere conjectures, ſeems not a little bold and arbitrary. For my part, I think it evident, beyond all contradiction, that we have no innate ideas at all. We need not go to *Locke* to be informed of this, which the obſervation of every parent and nurſe on earth can ſo fully confirm to us. For nature to give us ideas, which we muſt and do receive afterwards by the uſual inlets of our ſenſes, would be contrary to that frugality of means and cauſes, which ſhe obſerves in all things elſe. But it ſeems ſtill more abſurd to ſuppoſe we have ideas, which we are not ſenſible of till a certain age; that they lie dormant in the mind for a good many years; that when they do make their appearance, it is to no ſort of purpoſe, inaſmuch as they do not help in the leaſt to ſet us right in our notions of their objects, which happened to be amiſs before they ſhewed themſelves in the mind; nay, and that we are never ſenſible of their birth within us, nor even of any ſtruggle between them and our irrational preconceptions.

*Dech.* This which you make ſuch a wonder of, happens to all men in reſpect to all or moſt of their other ideas, which, being ſtored in the memory, lie there frequently for whole years ſo dormant, that the mind never recollects them, nor finds itſelf conſcious of their exiſtence, till their own objects, or ſome other ideas, with

with which they were aſſembled, happen to recal them to the mind.

*Shep.* This is very true, and I own would fully anſwer my argument againſt innate ideas, drawn from their not ſhewing themſelves in the mind for ſome time, were it not that whenever the mind recollects any idea, it is at the ſame time conſcious of having had that idea formerly, whereas when it firſt perceives in itſelf the idea of God, impreſſed by inſtruction, it is not in the leaſt conſcious, that any ſuch idea was ever perceived in it before. But, not to inſiſt on this, I am ſtill ſurpriſed, that when the time for its appearance is come, and the mind, which before that time hath entertained the moſt unworthy idea of Divinity, ſtands in great need of better information, this innate idea never rectifies its notions, nor reduces them to a right way of thinking about God.

*Dech.* That I think is eaſily enough accounted for. The mind having been long uſed to, and prejudiced in favour of, its erroneous conceptions of God, will not reſign them for the right impreſſion, when it does appear. You cannot but be ſenſible how difficult a thing it is to diſlodge religious prejudice from the mind, and introduce a truth in the place of it. This you will own is a work too hard for moſt of your teachers, who, if we may believe yourſelves, lend nature and reaſon all the aſſiſtance you can, when groſs errors are to be combated, and glaring truths recommended.

*Shep.* Yes; but then the Pagan, whom I endeavour to reclaim from the worſhip of the devil, or a plurality of gods, altho' he is not convinced, is ſenſible of the theology I have been laying before him, and alſo of the difference between that and his old opinions; whereas he was never conſcious in the leaſt of any idea of God ariſing ſpontaneouſly in his own mind, and oppoſing that which he received from a wrong education. Now an innate idea of God, which neither prevents unworthy notions of him, nor removes them when received, which is neither at all perceived itſelf, nor to be gueſſed at in the leaſt by its effects, is a very ſtrange ſort of an idea, and of no manner of uſe, that I can ſee; tho' by what you ſaid a while ago about the abſolute neceſſity of a natural,

univerſal, and clear religion and law in the breaſt of every man, I ſhould think your natural idea of God, on which all natural religion and law muſt abſolutely depend, ought to be ſtrong and evident in the higheſt degree, in order to anſwer any of the ends you propoſe by it. What ſhall we ſay to it therefore, when no mortal can perceive the leaſt glimpſe of it in himſelf, nor trace it in his mind by the fainteſt footſteps or effects? This natural idea of God, were it printed in ſo deep and ſtrong a character on the mind of every man, would certainly have either prevented all manner of idolatry in the world, or would be able to baniſh it from thence, ſhould it happen by any ſtrange unnatural means to take place; I am ſure at leaſt it muſt have given ſome men, eſpecially ſuch as the antient philoſophers, an occaſion to think a little more ſenſibly and worthily concerning the divine nature, than it ſeems they did. Were this idea, as being of more importance to every man in particular, and to ſociety in general, than all our other ideas, more univerſally clear and evident in all men, than ideas of ſenſe, as for the ſame reaſon it ought alſo to be more unchangeable and indeleble, I cannot conceive how it could have been poſſible for whole ſects of philoſophers to deny the very being of a God, and for *Vaninus*, *Jordanus Bruno*, *Caſimir Liſzinſki*, and *Mahomet Effendi*, to die martyrs to Atheiſm. No man, who can ſee clearly, denies the exiſtence of an houſe, or tree, placed directly before him in broad day-light; and if God were as ſtrongly and evidently apprehended by the mind of every man, previous to all information and deduction of reaſon, as by your hypotheſis he ought to be, if not more evidently, how could he poſſibly diſbelieve the being of a God? The certainty we have of ſenſible objects without us is upon the ſame footing with axioms and firſt principles. We can neither bring arguments for them, nor againſt them, becauſe they convince the mind of their exiſtence by their own light and evidence; whereas the exiſtence of God may be proved by reaſons; nay, and oppoſed by arguments capable of convincing ſome; which could never happen, were it rendered ſelf-evident by an idea ſtronger and clearer in the mind of every man than his ſenſible ideas

ideas of outward objects. A man confined to a dungeon all his days, and deprived of all converſation with mankind, would, I am afraid, be but a ſorry ſort of a divine. As he could neither receive the idea of God from inſtruction, nor collect it from his works, I cannot help thinking he could not ſo much as once conſider who made him, or whether ever he was made or not, nor entertain the leaſt notion of God.

*Dech.* You may be of that opinion; but you can never be ſure it would ſo happen, ſince you have no experiment of ſuch a fact to argue from.

*Shep.* But I have many experiments as good, of people born abſolutely deaf and blind, who never ſhewed the leaſt ſenſe of religion, or knowlege of God.

*Temp.* That is a full proof. Their bodies, deſtitute of thoſe two ſenſes, were effectual dungeons to their minds. But might not a man, in the full exerciſe of reaſon, and enjoyment of all his ſenſes, prove to himſelf, from the works of creation, the exiſtence of God?

*Shep.* Do you think it poſſible by our ſenſes to receive an idea of God, as we do of outward and ſenſible objects?

*Temp.* No; a ſpirit cannot be the object of any ſenſe; but by our ſenſes we can perceive his works, and by our reaſon trace his being from thence, as we do other cauſes by their effects.

*Dech.* There is nothing more certain. Every effect ſuppoſes a cauſe; and when the higheſt degree of wiſdom and goodneſs diſcovers itſelf in the effects, we cannot help believing the cauſe to be infinitely wiſe and good. If the effects are ſuch as no finite power could have produced, we muſt alſo ſuppoſe the cauſe to be infinitely powerful. There is a ſtrict alliance and conformity between all cauſes and their effects. Nothing can produce nothing. That which is fooliſh and weak, betrays its folly and weakneſs in its works; and that which is wiſe and powerful in a limited degree, can only demonſtrate a limited degree of wiſdom and power in its productions or operations. Now the works of creation demonſtrate infinite wiſdom and power, and therefore their cauſe muſt be infinitely wiſe and powerful. This is an eaſy demon-

demonſtration for the being of a God; and as it is obvious to every capacity, ſo it conveys to the meaneſt underſtanding a right idea of the divine nature, in reſpect to ſuch attributes as have any relation to our duty.

*Shep.* It is one thing to work out the demonſtration of a point once it is propoſed, and another to ſtrike upon the point itſelf. I cannot tell whether any man would have conſidered the works of creation as effects, if he had never been told they have a cauſe. We know very well, that even after the being of ſuch a cauſe was much talked of in the world, and believed by the generality of mankind; yet many, and great philoſophers, held the world to be eternal; and others aſcribed what we call the works of creation to an eternal ſeries of cauſes. If the moſt ſagacious of the philoſophers were capable of doing this, after hearing ſo much of a firſt cauſe, and a creation, what would they have done, and what would the groſs of mankind, who are inattentive and ignorant, have thought of the matter, if nothing had been taught concerning God, and the origin of things, but every ſingle man left ſolely to ſuch intimation as his own ſenſes and reaſon could have given him? The proofs *a priori* for the reality of a firſt cauſe, tho' very convincing, are, however, exceedingly metaphyſical and refined, and fitter to come in the rear of a long inquiry about the production of the world, than to lead the way. And, accordingly, we find the earlier ages of the world made uſe of no ſuch arguments; nay, did not ſo much as trouble themſelves about the queſtion, and either never inquired into it, or took their opinions upon that head merely from tradition. But, allowing that every man is able to demonſtrate to himſelf, that the world, and all things contained therein, are effects, and had a beginning, which I take to be a moſt abſurd ſuppoſition, and look upon it to be almoſt impoſſible for unaſſiſted reaſon to go ſo far; yet if effects are, according to your argument, to be aſcribed to ſimilar cauſes, and a good and wiſe effect muſt ſuppoſe a good and wiſe cauſe; by the ſame way of reaſoning, all the evil and irregularity in the world muſt be attributed to an evil and unwiſe cauſe; ſo that either the firſt cauſe muſt be

both

both good and evil, wiſe and fooliſh, or elſe there muſt be two firſt cauſes, an evil and irrational, as well as a good and wiſe principle. Thus man, left to himſelf, would be apt to reaſon. If the cauſe and its effects are ſimilar and conformable, matter muſt have a material cauſe, there being nothing more impoſſible for us to conceive, than how matter ſhould be produced by ſpirit, or any thing elſe but matter. The beſt reaſoner in the world, endeavouring to find out the cauſes of things by the things themſelves, and proceeding on the ſoundeſt maxims of philoſophy, on which you found your argument, might be led into the groſſeſt errors and contradictions, and find himſelf, at the end, in extreme want of an inſtructor. To argue *a priori* on this ſubject, is little better than nonſenſe; and the argument *a poſteriori* leads to ſuch difficulties, as mere reaſon is, at leaſt in moſt men, unable to diſſipate. Is the firſt cauſe good, wiſe, and powerful?

*Dech.* Yes; the effects produced by it demonſtrate this.

*Shep.* Is it infinitely ſo?

*Dech.* Undoubtedly; for no being, endowed with a leſs degree of thoſe attributes, could have given being, form, variety, and harmony, to the univerſe.

*Shep.* Does not the evil obſerved in the world ſuppoſe a bad cauſe?

*Dech.* I don't know but it may.

*Shep.* You will not, I believe, aſcribe an evil effect to a good cauſe. And pray how comes it to paſs, that the good cauſe, being infinitely wiſe and powerful, does not ſubdue the evil cauſe, and totally prevent its effects?

*Dech.* I believe it would have been better to have denied the reality of evil.

*Shep.* That cannot be done. Our own exiſtence is not more evident, than that pain, ſickneſs, death, &c. to ſay nothing of immoralities, are evils. All mankind dread and ſhun them, unleſs when the fear of greater evils compels them to do otherwiſe. Is it true, then, that good and evil have their diſtinct empires, and bound each other? And is the principle, from whence the one is derived, to be feared, as well as the author of the other

other to be loved? Is not fear a cauſe of adoration, as well as love? Are two oppoſite and ſupreme principles, therefore, to be worſhiped, according to the belief of almoſt all the Pagans now in the world? If the mere reaſon of every man could relieve itſelf from this difficulty, why ſhould the worſhip of devils prevail in ſo many nations, and keep its ground during ſo long a ſeries of ages? This, I think, is evident, that although reaſon ſhould be ſo ſtrong in one man, or in a few, as to find out the being of ſome ſuperior power; yet this would not, probably, happen, till after many ages ſpent in vain attempts to account for the origin and regularity of the world; and when ſome notion of this kind ſhould once be ſtruck out, it would be ſo imperfect, ſo uncertain, and blended with ſo much abſurdity and error, that it would ſcarcely be worth the propagating, which would be alſo a matter of infinite difficulty. But ſuppoſing it to prevail in ſome nations, or all over the world, having once pre-occupied the minds of men, the improvements made by others in after-times on the firſt imperfect diſcovery, inſtead of having the notions, derived from that diſcovery, as a baſis to build on, would find them, and the prejudices accompanying them, an infinite obſtacle to their propagation. What is ſaid of the firſt improvement, would be as true of all the ſubſequent ones. The old notions would be ſo many bars againſt the new; and, conſidering the great difficulty of the inquiry, and the vaſt room for conceit and imagination to graft their wild ſcions on the fruitful ſtock, it would require an almoſt infinite number of debates, refinements, and improvements, each of which muſt have a courſe thro' the world before they could be examined, in order to ſettle the right idea of God, and ſupport it with demonſtrations univerſally convincing. Reaſon labours under a yet greater difficulty in finding out the right notion of God. Reaſon, if I be not miſtaken, is that faculty by which we form propoſitions out of ideas already conceived, and, laying thoſe together, the terms of which have a neceſſary and ſelf-evident connexion or diſſonance, draw concluſions from thence. It is that power of the mind by which we hold, as it were, the light of clear and in-

conteſtable

conteſtable truths to dark and diſputable queſtions, and endeavour by that means to diſcover on which ſide of the latter we ought to fix our aſſent. He whoſe ideas of things repreſent their objects in true and determinate lights, and whoſe faculty of reaſon is ſtrong and clear, is called a judicious man. When this faculty is properly and judiciouſly exerciſed on a knowable propoſition, the reſult ſhould be called right reaſoning, rather than right reaſon. As the office of reaſon is not to ſupply the mind with ideas, but to judge of the connexion or diſagreement between thoſe already received; ſo it can only exerciſe itſelf on ſuch materials, as thoſe other faculties, that hold intelligence with objects, ſupply it with. This latter is the function of the ſenſes alone, which, for that purpoſe, are turned outward towards their proper objects, and ſet open as ſo many avenues and inlets to the ingredients of all our knowlege. It is vain to ſay we have any proper or immediate idea of ſpirit, and its operations, or that we have any other ſource of notions than ſenſation. If *Brown*'s *Procedure and extent of the underſtanding* had not clearly demonſtrated this, the trials every man may make in his own mind would do it effectually. When we look into ourſelves with a ſharp and unprejudiced eye, we plainly perceive ſpirit repreſented there analogically by our idea of ſome ſubtil matter, its operations by thoſe of body, and both, not only in our external, but internal ſpeech, by terms and ſigns appropriated to ſenſible objects. If then all our ideas are derived from ſenſation, if reaſon can operate no farther than it hath ideas to work on, and if the Divine Being is not the object of any one ſenſe, how much at a loſs muſt reaſon be to fix our way of thinking concerning that which it is furniſhed with no idea of!

*Dech.* Were this argument of yours capable of proveing any thing, it would prove too much for your purpoſe, and reduce us to abſolute Atheiſm, thro' an impoſſibility of forming any idea of God.

*Shep.* I did not ſay, Sir, that it was impoſſible to form any idea of God; but only, that reaſon, left to itſelf, having no power of its own to form any ideas at all, and being ſupplied with ideas to work on only through the

the ſenſes, could hardly form a right idea of God. This, however, it might be enabled to do by him who taught it to believe, that the ſoul of man is formed in the image of God; and that as we repreſent our ſouls to our own conceptions by a ſimilitude or analogy to matter, ſo we ought to repreſent him in our thoughts by the analogy between him and our ſouls. Pray, Mr. *Dechaine*, is the ſoul of man of the ſame nature with God?

*Dech.* I think it would be too bold to ſay it is.

*Shep.* It would not only be too bold, but impious and abſurd. There is certainly an infinite difference of nature between the uncreated omnipreſent Spirit, and even the higheſt order of Angels. It follows, therefore, that in thinking of God we are forced to help ourſelves out by a ſimilitude, which, till it was revealed to us, the force of human reaſon could not give us a right notion, not to ſay aſſurance, of. But now that this reſemblance between God and ourſelves is diſcovered to us, we can lay the foundations of our knowlege here on earth, and raiſe the ſuperſtructure above the higheſt heavens. When you ſpeak of reaſon, Mr. *Dechaine*, and repreſent it as able eaſily to find out God, you deceive yourſelf for want of conſidering the vaſt difference between reaſon uninſtructed, undiſciplined, and unfurniſhed with ſpiritual ideas, and reaſon already refined by divine and human culture. All mankind reaſon, not only in proportion to the various ſtrength of their reaſoning faculties, but according, alſo, to the ſtore of materials laid in to reaſon on, and the various degrees of care and ſkill employed in training up their ſeveral faculties to an habit or art of perceiving, recollecting, and reaſoning. The bodies and minds of men are ſo contrived, as to ſtand in need of our continual care and culture. The nouriſhment of the firſt, and its health, depend upon the arts of raiſing food from the earth, and preparing it for uſe; of providing cloaths, building houſes, keeping ourſelves clean, uſing medicines on occaſion, *&c.* Its graceful carriage depends alſo on art, and we want to be taught how to ſit, ſtand, walk, and diſpoſe of our arms and hands in a becoming manner. As to the mind, it ſtands in equal need of ſkill and management. It comes

comes into the world ignorant, and, what is worſe, rude, and prone to wild paſſions, and fierce diſpoſitions. We have not even the full uſe of our ſenſes, till art and culture have taught us how to employ them. The eye, of itſelf, can give us no meaſure of diſtance, a thing in which we are greatly concerned. The carrying it to an eminence, to give us a view of an approaching enemy, the preventing the judgment from being impoſed on by it, when it repreſents a direct object, placed in two mediums of different denſities, as crooked, when, looking through improper mediums, it ſhews objects in falſe colours and ſizes, when it exhibits a near hill as larger than a diſtant mountain, with many other caſes of the like nature, make part of the art of ſeeing, and ſhew us, that, the eye being but an inſtrument, we ſtand in need of an higher faculty to direct us in its uſe. The ſame may be ſaid in reſpect to all our other ſenſes. The imagination, which is ſubject to great irregularities, requires much ſkill to attach it to proper objects, to confine it within due bounds, to aſſiſt it in forming its aſſemblages of ideas, and ſo to refine and exalt it, that due force and dignity may be given to the impreſſions made on it. The memory likewiſe wants great exerciſe and improvement, to make it a ready and effectual inſtrument to the judgment. Much depends on duly claſſing and regulating the notions ſtored up in it, that its materials may be preſented to reaſon in a clear order and method. The laying up of our ideas, as it were, in diſtinct apartments, the retaining them with firmneſs, and recollecting them with readineſs, depend exceedingly on management and habit. Reaſon, which is the faculty by which we are rendered teachable, and the very organ, if I may ſo ſay, of docility, ſtands extremely in need of inſtruction and exerciſe, tho' the under-faculties of the mind ſhould ſupply it never ſo plentifully and methodically with the materials on which it is to operate. You may lay a ſufficient quantity of excellent ſtone, timber, *&c.* on the ſpot where you intend to build; yet, if your architect wants taſte and ſkill, he will give you but an indifferent houſe. Reaſon, before it is exerciſed and trained to its office, wants penetration and diſcernment to diſtinguiſh

guiſh a real and natural connexion of ideas from a ſeeming and unnatural one, wants attention to keep it cloſe to the point in queſtion, and ſtrength to purſue a long ſeries of arguments commencing at the queſtion, and leading the aſſent round to the concluſion. If the philoſophers had not thought reaſon wanted aſſiſtance, they had never been at the trouble to contrive inſtruments and rules to regulate its operations.

*Dech.* In my opinion you might as well talk of teaching a man to hunger and thirſt, as to ſee and reaſon. Thoſe philoſophers who contrived rules and inſtruments for reaſoning, had, I believe, nothing elſe in view than to reduce the world to ſuch a way of reaſoning as might beſt ſerve to recommend the ſyſtems they had invented, which were often too extraordinary to be approved of, if the diſciple was not firſt artificially trained to a like method of reaſoning with that of the philoſopher. This gave birth to all the jargon of the antient and modern ſchools, and it was found neceſſary to lay it aſide, before the learned world could recover a juſt or intelligible way of reaſoning.

*Shep.* The application of a wrong or defective remedy to a diſorder, does by no means prove, that there is no ſuch diſorder. If moſt men reaſon wrong, as it is plain they do, and on no ſubjects more remarkably than thoſe of religion; it were certainly a thing much to be wiſhed, that they were taught to reaſon better. Men who live in times and places of ignorance, hardly reaſon at all, and are little better than brutes, in compariſon of ſuch as have been bred up in ages and countries well enlightened. Uneducated and illiterate men are able to reaſon on few points, and thoſe ſuch as relate to their daily occupations and affairs; even men of the greateſt abilities and learning, not only reaſon variouſly and contrarily on the ſame queſtions, but conceive differently of reaſon itſelf. *Hobbes*, in his *Leviath.* part I. chap. 5. undertakes to define the faculty of reaſon, and abſurdly gives a moſt whimſical definition of the mere act, drawn from the etymology of the word. He ſays, *It is reckoning (that is, adding and ſubtracting) of the conſe-*

*conſequences of general names agreed upon for the marking and ſignifying our thoughts.*

*Dech.* That is, indeed, a moſt wild definition.

*Shep. Cumberland* defines right reaſon to be *affirmation and negation, according to the real nature of things.*

*Dech.* That comes nearer to the matter.

*Shep.* Yet that is neither a definition of reaſon, conſidered as a faculty of the mind, nor as an act.

*Dech.* Is it not a definition of the act of right reaſoning?

*Shep.* I think not. The whole act of reaſoning, whether right or wrong, is over, before we either affirm or deny any thing; or if it is not, we affirm or deny without having reaſoned. This definition gives us no idea of the extent or power of reaſon, and therefore can be of no uſe in our preſent inquiry. *Tindal* ſays, *When we attribute any operation to reaſon, as diſtinguiſhing between truth and falſhood,* &c. *we mean by it the rational faculties*; and by the *rational faculties* he means, the natural ability to apprehend, judge, and infer. Here he abſurdly puts apprehenſion into the definition of reaſon; whereas apprehenſion is that diſtinct faculty, by which we previouſly receive the ideas afterwards to be reaſoned on, or perceive the truth of ſelf-evident propoſitions, from which the faculty of reaſon, by a diſtinct and ſubſequent act, is to draw concluſions. Apprehenſion therefore, whoſe office it is by the ſenſes, and a ſimple act of the mind, to furniſh reaſon with its materials, can neither be reaſon itſelf, nor a part of reaſon. We do not ſay a man reaſons, when he ſees or hears, nor when he apprehends the truth of a ſelf-evident propoſition, ſuch as, that the whole is greater than any of its parts. Thus men much uſed to reaſoning, and extremely apt to magnify their own reaſon, ſpeak as differently of it, as if they had quite different faculties. Reaſon, as commonly taken by controverſial writers, is the faculty; whereas it is the act, which for the moſt part they define. But in the preſent debate it is our buſineſs to conſider the faculty alone, that we may ſee whether, either by its office or power, it is able to furniſh us with a right idea of God. Now nothing can be more evi-

dent,

dent, than that it furniſhes the mind with no ideas; that it can only perform its office ſo far as it is ſupplied by other faculties with ideas; and that, even when it is, it ſtands extremely in need of inſtruction how to manage its materials. As to *Tindal*'s definition of the act of reaſon, it is only a long account of the manner, by which, in his opinion, we receive our ideas, and how we apprehend the truth of ſelf-evident propoſitions, and from thence deduce demonſtrations or probabilities. In order to make reaſon the faculty, by which God judges and acts, as well as man, he makes intuition a part of reaſon, and confounds the one with the other; from whence he draws conſequences afterwards, and thoſe in the words of our divines, extremely prejudicial to revealed religion.

*Temp.* Pray, Mr. *Shepherd*, in what do you make the mere act of reaſoning to conſiſt? And when may we be ſaid to reaſon rightly?

*Shep.* As to the act of reaſon, it is the drawing concluſions from premiſes; and is ſaid to be right, when thoſe concluſions are rightly drawn from right premiſes. Yet, in my opinion, reaſon does her office well, when ſhe draws her concluſions rightly from the beſt lights ſhe hath, tho' thoſe lights ſhould deceive her. It is the buſineſs of the ſenſes, experience, and inſtruction, to furniſh reaſon with right ideas and principles; and hers, to draw right concluſions from thence. Till ſhe receives notices, ſhe cannot operate at all. If the notices are imperfect or falſe, tho' ſhe performs her part never ſo well, ſhe muſt unavoidably run into errors. Altho' the notices ſhe receives ſhould be right and perfect, yet ſhe may draw the concluſions imperfectly or falſly; for there is ſuch a thing as wrong reaſoning. As to the faculty of reaſon, which is what *Tindal*, and all others, who pretend to conſider the extent and power of the mind in beating out truths, ought to have defined, it is that ability of the ſoul, by which in her preſent ſtate, with the help of certain organs of the brain, ſhe draws concluſions from premiſes; in other words, the faculty of judging. It is of no uſe in this, or any other controverſy that I know of, about reaſon, to determine whe-

ther the ſoul hath only one ſimple power, which in one inſtance perceives, and in another judges; or whether ſhe hath diſtinct powers for theſe diſtinct offices; becauſe the effects and extent of reaſoning may be in either caſe the ſame. In our preſent frame the bodily organs are evidently made neceſſary, not only to the introduction of notices, but alſo to the examination and uſe of them after they are introduced. It is alſo manifeſt enough from experience, that diſtinct organs are ſet apart for the ſeveral operations of the mind. The ſouls of men are generally confeſſed to be all equal and unchangeable; but the ſoul of one man receives clearer notices, and reaſons better from them, than the ſoul of another. Which difference can ariſe from nothing elſe, but ſome difference in the organs, by which apprehenſion and reaſon operate. Nay, even in the ſame man one faculty exerts itſelf with more force and clearneſs, than another; and we frequently ſee perſons, who have the uſe of one or two powers of the mind, while the reſt ſeem almoſt, or totally, obliterated. Some madmen apprehend and imagine with great ſtrength, and reaſon not at all. In ſleep the imagination and memory are extremely active, while the judgment is wholly ſuſpended. Fevers and blows on the head frequently impair or deſtroy one faculty, and leave the reſt intire, or little hurt. The ſoul, however, is ſtill the ſame, and her peculiar power or powers unchanged. So is ſhe through all the ſtages of life; and yet we ſee the exerciſe of her powers grow and decline with the body. Shut up all the ſenſes, and reaſon cannot at all exert herſelf for want of materials to work with. Open one ſenſe, and ſhe can operate on the ideas of that claſs, but no other. Open a ſecond, and her ſtock being enlarged, ſhe expatiates in a new field of knowlege; and ſo on, but not perfectly, till the organs or inſtruments, by which ſhe operates, are come to full maturity and ſtrength, which are acquired by the ſame methods exactly with the ſtrength of an hand or leg, that is, by natural growth and exerciſe. The leg of a child is not ſo ſtrong and active as that of a full-grown man, nor that of an indolent perſon ſo ſupple and elaſtic as that of a rope-dancer. Nay, exerciſe in one

thing

thing does not produce a perfect agility in another. It is juſt ſo in thoſe nearer organs, by which the ſoul apprehends, recollects, and judges. They vegetate and grow by degrees; uſe and exerciſe give them a great part of the ſtrength, with which they operate; and exerciſe and application, properly managed, give them force and expertneſs in one branch of knowlege, without much advancing their power in others.

*Dech.* It follows from your theory, that the body and matter think, recollect, and reaſon, as well as the ſoul.

*Shep.* By no means. Altho' in our preſent ſtate it is evident, that thought, memory, and judgment, are the reſult of mind, and matter organized, yet it is only the ſoul that performs theſe operations by the uſe of bodily organs. It is not the hatchet, that fells the tree, nor the compaſſes, that ſweep the circle; it is he, who wields and employs thoſe inſtruments.

*Dech.* The ſoul, then, when ſtripped from the body, can neither think, nor recollect, cannot reaſon. This ſeems ſtrange doctrine for the mouth of a divine.

*Shep.* If the ſoul, in any caſe, or at any time, is totally diveſted of all material organs, tho' ſhe will then exerciſe ſuch powers as are peculiar to herſelf, ſhe will neither have ideas, nor recollect, nor reaſon. Her operations will be ſtrictly analogous to her preſent acts, but not of the ſame kind; ſo that it may be ſaid with truth, but not in the immediate and proper ſenſe of the word, that ſhe ſhall think, *&c.* after her ſeparation from the body. We ſay with truth, that God is wiſe and juſt; but ſurely we do not mean, that his wiſdom operates at all, as ours does, on ſenſible ideas, and in long deductions of reaſon. Is his juſtice determined by law and obligation, like ours? We are relative beings, and our duty ariſes from the ſituation we are placed in. But duty and relation cannot be applied to God, who is above all the laws of his creatures, makes, repeals, or diſpenſes with them, as he thinks fit; and when he varies the relations and conditions of men, of kingdoms, of worlds, cauſes new, nay and oppoſite rules of duty to reſult from thence. The eſſence of human juſtice conſiſts in a conformity to the laws, by which the actions

of men ought to be regulated. Who ſees not, that when thoſe laws are removed, and the determinations of a Being, ſuperior to all law, come to be conſidered, juſtice cannot be predicated of that Being eſſentially in the ſame ſenſe it is of men? Our nature is different from, and infinitely inferior to, that of God. *Tindal* ſays, *Our reaſon for kind, tho' not for degree, is of the ſame nature with God's, and that it is by reaſon that we are the image of God.* He ſays much the ſame in reſpect to juſtice, and that *God and man are bound by the ſame law.* But this, inſtead of making man the image of God, will make him, as Dr. *Brown* hath well obſerved, a God in miniature. Man is only formed in the likeneſs of the Divine Nature; but is no more divine, than the image or picture of a man is human.

*Dech.* What notion then can we have of God, or his attributes?

*Shep.* Such an one as ſerves all our purpoſes perfectly well. We know, for inſtance, that he is wiſe, and attentive to all our thoughts, words, and actions, altho' we are ſure he does not perceive and attend in the ſame manner we do. We know likewiſe, that he is juſt; and that altho' juſtice in him be of a different kind from juſtice in us, yet, as our God and Governor, he will equitably judge us by the laws he hath given us. This is ſufficient; and to look farther is folly and preſumption.

*Dech.* And pray, Doctor, how will the ſoul of man be conſcious of its former good or evil actions, upon your hypotheſis, after death?

*Shep.* I did not ſay the ſoul after death will retain no material vehicle. If I had, I muſt have ſaid more, than either reaſon or ſcripture authorizes. Beſides, the very ſoul itſelf may retain the impreſſions of its former virtues or vices in a way diſtinct from memory; or, by the help of analogy, look back into this mixed condition, as it now looks forward into the world of ſpirits. It may ſee its former actions in the records of God, and by all or any of theſe, or other means unknown to us, be conſcious of its former good or evil actions. Be that as it will, what you call an hypotheſis, is too evident to

experience to be denied. It is, I think, manifeſt enough from what hath been ſaid, that reaſon receives all her ideas from other faculties, and ſtands greatly in need of inſtruction in order to the right performance of her own office; but moſt of all, when ſhe is to weigh propoſitions, and draw concluſions about objects, that are only to be analogically apprehended and conſidered. The mind of man imports its rules of reaſoning, as well as notions, from abroad; and one generation teaches another, not only religion, but all other ſciences. The art of reaſoning rightly, follows inſtruction, and is progreſſive, and traditional. We can trace it from *Syria* to *Egypt*, from *Egypt* to *Greece*, from *Greece* to *Italy*, and from thence weſtward and northward, to the reſt of *Europe*; while all the other nations of the earth, excepting the *Chineſe*, who made but little advances in knowlege, lying without the verge of right religious inſtruction, remained profoundly ignorant. Reaſon in them, not meeting with opportunities of culture, and the ſeeds of knowlege, lay fallow, and produced little or no inventions, and ſcarcely any improvement in arts and ſciences. No country, that we know of, ever became ingenious and learned, from barbarous and ignorant, merely of themſelves. In all countries, we have an acquaintance with, knowlege bears an exact proportion to inſtruction. Why does the learned, and well-educated, reaſon better than the mere citizen? Why the citizen better than the boor? Why the *Engliſh* boor better than the *Spaniſh*? Why the *Spaniſh* better than the *Mooriſh*? Why the *Mooriſh* better than the *Negro*? And why does he reaſon more expertly than the *Hottentot*? If then reaſon is found to go hand in hand, and ſtep for ſtep, with education, what would be the conſequence, if there were no education? There is no fallacy more groſs, than to imagine reaſon utterly untaught and undiſciplined, capable of the ſame attainments in knowlege with reaſon refined and well-inſtructed; or to ſuppoſe, that reaſon can as eaſily find itſelf in principles to argue from, as draw the conſequences, once they are found; I mean eſpecially in reſpect to objects not perceivable by our ſenſes. In ordinary articles of knowlege, our ſenſes and experience furniſh reaſon with

with ideas and principles to work on; and continual conferences and debates give it exerciſe in ſuch matters; and that improves its vigour and activity. But, in reſpect to God, it can have no right idea nor axiom to ſet out with, till he is pleaſed to reveal them to it.

*Temp.* It is too manifeſt to be diſputed, that a man left wholly to himſelf, and utterly untaught, would reaſon very imperfectly, if at all. But, as you obſerved juſt now, men in their inquiries and debates ſharpen and teach one another to reaſon; and once they have attained to the right uſe of their faculties, I cannot ſee what ſhould hinder them from employing thoſe faculties in the contemplation of effects and cauſes; and if one man ſhould form an imperfect idea of the cauſe or cauſes of all things, another might improve on his diſcovery, a third on his, and ſo on, till the right idea of the one firſt cauſe might be found out.

*Shep.* This might poſſibly happen; but how long it might be before reaſon itſelf cou'd be ſufficiently improved in many or moſt men for an inquiry after the firſt cauſes of things, and how many ages muſt paſs, after this improvement could be made, ere all doubts and uncertainties could be cleared up, and the right idea of God be found out and fixed; and then what an immenſe ſpace of time it would take to propagate the right idea over all the world, againſt the current of all its received errors, and rooted prejudices, without miracles, and without a miniſtry, let every candid perſon judge. What muſt mankind do all this time for want of a Divine law and obligation, the abſolute neceſſity of which we have already conſidered? Beſides, Gentlemen, if I miſtake not, mankind are full as apt to degenerate, as improve in religious knowlege. I am ſure we have fewer inſtances of the latter than the former, in ſuch ages and countries as were not kept in ſight of the true religion by a continual ſeries of revelations. If we give credit to the *Jewiſh* and *Chriſtian* hiſtory, we ſhall be convinced, that all the nations of the world at firſt knew and ſerved the true God, and fell from his worſhip, in proceſs of time, to that of idols and devils, except the *Jews*, who were with the greateſt difficulty reſtrained from doing the ſame,

by revelations, miracles, and national judgments; and the *Chriſtians*, whom the cleareſt lights have not altogether preſerved from the incroachments of idolatry. But as this track of hiſtory is of little or no authority with you, Mr. *Dechaine*, be ſo good as to ſhew us, from what hiſtory you pleaſe, an inſtance of any one nation under the ſun, that emerged from abſolute atheiſm or idolatry, into the knowlege or adoration of the one true God, without the aſſiſtance of revelation. The *Americans*, the *Africans*, the *Tartars*, and the ingenious *Chineſe*, have had time enough, one would think, to find out the true and right idea of God, which you ſay is more evident to all mankind, than any idea of ſenſe; and yet, after above five thouſand years improvement upon their innate ideas of God, and the full exerciſe of reaſon, which you exalt, and almoſt deify, they have at this day got no farther in their progreſs towards the true religion, than to the worſhip of ſtocks, ſtones, and devils. How many thouſand years muſt be allowed to theſe nations, to reaſon themſelves into the true religion, by Mr. *Dechaine*, and our other Deiſts, who inſiſt, that this religion is evident to all men, in all ages and countries? The Chriſtian religion, it ſeems, came too late into the world, to be true; but natural religion, tho' not yet arrived, is recommended ſufficiently by its truth, antiquity, and univerſality. What the lights of nature and reaſon could do to inveſtigate the knowlege of God, is beſt ſeen by what they have really done. We cannot argue more convincingly on any foundation, than that of known and inconteſtable facts. Give me leave therefore to be particular in expoſing the theology of the Pagans from the records of their own writers. All the nations of the earth, that were left to themſelves, fell, ſome ſooner, and others later, into groſs idolatry. At firſt they worſhiped the luminaries of Heaven, and then their departed Kings and benefactors, for gods. Then they made images for them, and in a little time terminated the greater part of their adoration in thoſe wooden repreſentatives of their dead deities. It was not long after theſe firſt-fruits of nature, till they added to the catalogue of their gods, the moſt barbarous oppreſſors,

the

the vileſt impoſtors, the lewdeſt proſtitutes, and the moſt infamous adulterers, murderers, and parricides, the earth ever groaned under. Such deities were to be worſhiped with ſuitable rites and ſacrifices. The *Salii* and *Corybantes*, prieſts of *Mars* and *Cybele*, performed the ceremonies of thoſe deities with frantic dances, and outrageous fits of madneſs. In the rites of *Bacchus*, not only the prieſts, but all the people, men, women, and children, having their faces ſmeared with the lees of wine, and being half-drunk, ran about the fields, and through the woods, in a moſt horrible fit of diſtraction, howling like wild beaſts, and friſking from place to place with ſuch ridiculous and immodeſt geſticulations, as nothing but the ſtrong poſſeſſion of ſome demon could have prompted them to. It was, no doubt on't, a moſt rational kind of religion, that could have put the antient men, the diſcreet matrons, and the modeſt virgins, on ſuch wild extravagancies. The ſight of ſuch a ceremony was, I muſt own, wonderfully decent and ſolemn, and its tendency highly edifying and virtuous. Much the ſame ſort of friſkings and howlings were uſed in the ceremonies of many other heathen gods; and in thoſe of *Baal* they were accompanied with a cuſtom moſt ſhocking and unnatural. The prieſts, as they capered about the altar, gaſhed their fleſh with knives and lancets, and ran into furious fits of diſtraction. The moſt ſolemn act of worſhip, performed to the *Syrian Baal* by his ordinary devotees, was to break wind, and eaſe themſelves, at the foot of his image. The religious rites performed in honour of *Venus* in *Cyprus*, and at *Aphac* on Mount *Libanus*, conſiſted in lewdneſs of the groſſeſt kinds. The young people of both ſexes crouded from all parts to thoſe ſinks of pollution, and, filling the groves and temples with their ſhameleſs practices, committed whoredom by thouſands, out of pure devotion. All the *Babylonian* women were obliged to proſtitute themſelves once in their lives, at the temple of *Venus* or *Mylitta*, to the firſt man that aſked them; and the money earned by this extraordinary act of devotion, be it more or leſs, was always eſteemed ſacred. The nocturnal myſteries at *Rome* were not carried to

ſuch enormous exceſſes; but they were nevertheleſs very ſcandalous meetings, and gave occaſion to all ſorts of debaucheries. The devils, however, whom nature had choſen for her gods, were not contented with drunkenneſs and lewdneſs; they muſt be worſhiped with murder too, and that of the moſt ſhocking ſort. Human ſacrifices were offered up almoſt in all the heathen countries; and, to make them the more acceptable to their good-natured gods, the parents burned their own children alive to *Baal*, *Moloch*, and many other of their deities. Here in *Britain*, and in *Gaul*, it was a common practice to ſurround a man with a kind of wicker-work, and burn him to death, in honour of their gods. The *Scythians* ſacrificed to *Mars* one in every hundred of the captives taken in war. The *Peruvians*, in their ſacrifices, had a cuſtom of tying a living man to a ſtake, and pulling the fleſh off his bones by ſmall pieces, which they broiled and eat in his ſight, believing they did him the greateſt honour in treating him after this manner. The *Carthaginians*, in times of public calamity, not only burnt alive the children of the beſt families to *Saturn*, and that by hundreds, but ſometimes ſacrificed themſelves in the ſame manner in great numbers. Oracles, aſtrology, ſoothſaying, ſuperſtition, magic, *&c.* over-ran the whole heathen world, and preſided over the very councils of the wiſeſt ſtates. The gods of the heathens are, on all occaſions, repreſented by their own worſhipers, as envious of human happineſs. This might be made appear by a great variety of quotations from profane writers, who often ſpeak on that topic juſt as *Amaſis* did in his famous letter to *Polycrates*. If in this they gave a true character of their gods, it ſhews thoſe gods were devils. A female divinity was always remarkable for her ſpleen, and never failed to be revenged, if any one, when he made an entertainment for the reſt of the gods, happened to forget her in his invitation. If nature is left to contrive gods for herſelf, they muſt be like herſelf, and ſubject to the ſame paſſions and infirmities. Such were the bright rays of natural light! Such the bleſſed effects in Pagan countries to this day, of following the wiſe dictates of nature!

What

What the *Romans* thought of their gods, may be ſeen by their behaviour on the death of *Germanicus*. They battered the temples, ſays *Suetonius*, with ſtones, they overthrew the altars of the gods, and flung their houſhold deities into the ſtreets. *Le Compte* and *Duhald* aſſure us, the *Chineſe*, after offering largely to their gods, and being diſappointed of their aſſiſtance, ſometimes ſue them for damages, and obtain decrees againſt them from the Mandarins. This ingenious people, when their houſes are on fire, to the imminent peril of their wooden gods, hold them to the flames, in hopes of an effect, that might be more rationally expected from a ſmall veſſel of water. A religion, ſo highly reſpected, muſt, no doubt on't, have excellent effects upon the morality of its profeſſors, and powerfully enforce the laws of ſociety. However, I do not think it reaſonable to expect much piety from people towards gods of their own manufacture. What notion do you imagine a ſtatuary muſt have had of religion, when he was labouring to give a *Jupiter* that awful look, and thoſe eyebrows, with which he was to attract devotion; or when he was giving a *Venus* thoſe charms, by which he ſuppoſed ſhe had engaged the affections of *Mars*, *Adonis*, *Anchiſes*, and the reſt of her gallants? The humour of *Lucian*, in his auction of the gods, was probably taken from ſome real auction of the kind, in which he might have ſeen a complete ſet of houſhold deities canted to the higheſt bidder, and carried away for very trifling ſums, as gods of little value, ſince they could not protect the family, to whom they formerly belonged, from diſtreſs, and the neceſſity of ſelling all they had. It would certainly have been a very ſurpriſing ſight to one of us, to have ſeen a perſon, whom we knew to be a man of ſober mind and good ſenſe in other things, going to a ſhop to cheapen gods, and differing with the workman for a peny in the price of a *Jupiter*. The *Tyrians* were a wiſe people, and therefore, when *Alexander* laid ſiege to their city, they chained *Apollo* to *Hercules*, to prevent his giving them the ſlip. If the ingenious Mr. *Dechaine* had lived in *Egypt*, during its wonderful fertility of gods, I cannot but think how religiouſly he would have fed the canine object of

his worſhip with the ſavoury diſcharge of his own bowels, and then immediately fallen on his knees to adore him. The prieſtcraft of Chriſtianity is that alone which hath blinded his eyes, and hindered his natural light from pointing out this elegant kind of worſhip to him.

*Dech.* Pr'ythee, Parſon, obſerve a little decency, if not in reſpect to the company, yet at leaſt out of regard to the ſubject. If we are to deal in ſuch ſuppoſitions, I can eaſily enough gueſs what would have been the conſequence, had the pious Mr. *Shepherd*, inſtead of a demure and ſanctified Chriſtian parſon, been a prieſt of the *Cyprian Venus*. I cannot help laughing within myſelf, when I conſider how powerfully his warmth of heart and zeal would have exerted themſelves on the great feſtivals of the goddeſs, and how ably he would have defended the poſitive inſtitution celebrated on thoſe occaſions.

*Shep.* I muſt own, the morality of all men will ever be of a piece with their religion. That was the caſe with the heathens, who never thought themſelves obliged to be better than their gods; and accordingly did not only indulge their luſts and appetites out of principle, but ran into general cuſtoms of the moſt horrid and abominable nature, having nothing in their religion to reſtrain them. Fornication was eſteemed no ſin among them; nor did they commit ſodomy with half the ſhame or remorſe that attend wenching among Chriſtians. They expoſed ſuch of their children, as they did not like, to be eaten by wild beaſts; a cruelty practiſed at this day by the *Hottentots*, and ſome other *African* nations. Several nations, inhabiting the banks of the *Danube*, were wont to fling their new-born children into the river, and thoſe only that ſwam were taken out and ſuckled. The *Caribes* frequently caſtrated their children, that they might grow the fatter, and be the more delicate food. The politeſt of them were entertained at their public ſhews with men killing men, and their fellow-creatures engaged in horrible encounters with lions and tygers. Some nations of them eat human fleſh, which is a kind of diet, if we may believe our travellers, much reliſhed by ſeveral Pagan nations at this day. Others, ſuch were

their

their notions of filial piety, killed their parents at a certain age, and feaſted on their fleſh, thinking it the greateſt tenderneſs to relieve them from the miſeries of old age; and the higheſt honour that could be done them, to entomb them in their own bowels. It was a cuſtom in moſt of the Eaſtern nations, and, they ſay, is ſometimes practiſed at this day, for her, who loved her huſband more than the reſt of his wives, to kill herſelf at his funeral. The *Perſians* made no ſcruple of marrying their own mothers or daughters, a thing more abhorred than even murder itſelf, by other nations; and it was lawful among the *Egyptians* for brother and ſiſter to marry.

*Dech.* Theſe moral enormities, practiſed by whole nations, can never ſerve your purpoſe, becauſe they were neither agreeable to nature, nor dictated by it, but the mere effects of cuſtom, education, and prieſtcraft.

*Shep.* I cannot ſee what profit any ſpecies of prieſts could have derived from the greater part of theſe practices; but I ſhall freely own they were the effects of cuſtom and education. Yet, on the other hand, you muſt confeſs, that if the light of nature had as clearly and uniformly ſhewn every man his duty on all occaſions, as his eye ſhews him the differences between colours, as *Tindal* ſays it muſt have done, no man, or at leaſt no body of men, could have ever given into ſuch enormities, much leſs conſidered them as acts of piety and duty. Thoſe nations never miſtook white for black, nor blue for yellow; never, in open day-light, took an horſe for a tree, or a tree for a man; who carried out their ſick, as ſoon as they thought their caſe deſperate, and threw them on the ground to periſh by the injuries of the wind and weather; who forced their wives to miſcarry, in order to ſave the expence of maintaining their children; whoſe women, in the fury of a battle, flung their infants on the lances of their enemies, to terrify them with a dreadful idea of their reſolution. We hear much ſaid of the exalted virtue ſhewn by ſome antient heathens; but as they had no religious principles to ſupport their virtue, it is to be ſuſpected they only wore it for ſhew, and to get a name. Revenge and

ſelf-murder were not only tolerated, but eſteemed heroic, by the beſt of them. I know not, in all profane hiſtory, ſix more illuſtrious characters, than thoſe of *Lycurgus*, *Timoleon*, *Cicero*, *Cato Uticenſis*, *Brutus*, and *Germanicus*. The firſt encouraged tricking and ſtealing by an expreſs law. The ſecond, upon principle, murdered his own brother. *Cicero*, with all his fine talk about religion and virtue, had very little of either; as may appear by what he ſays (I think it is in a letter to *Atticus*) on the death of his daughter *Tullia*; *I hate the very gods, who have hitherto been ſo profuſe in their favours to me*; and by deſerting his friends and his country, and turning a ſervile flatterer to *Cæſar*. *Brutus* concludes all his mighty heroiſm with this exclamation; *Virtue, I have purſued thee in vain, and found thee to be but an empty name*; and then kills himſelf. *Cato*'s virtue was not ſtrong enough to hinder his turning a public robber and oppreſſor, witneſs his *Cyprian* expedition; nor to bear up againſt the calamities of life, and ſo he cut his own throat, and ran away, like a coward, from his country and the world. *Germanicus*, who exceeded all men in natural ſweetneſs of temper, at the approach of death called his friends about him, and ſpent his laſt moments in preſſing them to take revenge of *Piſo* and *Plancina*, for poiſoning or betwitching him, in directing them how this might beſt be done, and in receiving their oaths for the performance of his requeſt. His ſenſe of religion he thus expreſſed on that occaſion: *Had I died by the decree of fate, I ſhould have had juſt cauſe of reſentment againſt the gods, for hurrying me away from my parents, my wife, and my children, in the flower of my youth, by an untimely death.* Here is an inſtance of piety and humanity, ſuch as the beſt of natures, left to itſelf, was able to produce. How infinitely above this was the ſpirit and temper of mind, which Chriſtianity enabled *Stephen* and the other primitive Martyrs to carry towards their murderers, face to face, and in the very fact! *Germanicus* was only perſuaded, that *Piſo* had bewitched him; and his ſuſpicions ſeem to have been founded merely on ſuperſtition: *There were found*, ſays *Tacitus*, *on the ground, and in the walls, the relics of dead*

*dead bodies, charms, incantations, leaden tablets with the name of* Germanicus, *and half-burnt embers ſmeared with gore, by which the ſouls of men are delivered over to the infernal gods.* This was all that appeared to have been done; and nothing but groſs ſuperſtition could have induced *Germanicus* to aſcribe his own death to ſuch inefficacious means. Beſides, he had cauſe only to ſuſpect *Piſo* and *Plancina* to be the authors of theſe practices, and upon that ſuſpicion breathes out his ſoul in fury and revenge againſt them. But *Stephen*, acting upon a nobler principle, and with a more exalted ſpirit, ſees his murderers about him, and, while they are flinging ſtones at him, is on his knees earneſtly ſoliciting God to forgive them.

*Dech.* The beſt men, as well Chriſtians as Heathens, are ſometimes guilty of the groſſeſt vices; but we ought rather to trace their principles thro' their general virtues, than their particular failures.

*Shep.* What you call failures, were crimes of ſo black a nature, as men of real piety and virtue could hardly have been guilty of. But you ought to obſerve, Sir, that the crimes I object to theſe heathen worthies, were committed on principle. If we were to make a catalogue of heathen enormities, perpetrated in violation of the feeble principles dictated by the light of nature, it would be too black for the humanity of a Chriſtian, and too long for the patience of a Deiſt, to peruſe. The thirty tyrants at *Athens* made the daughters dance in the blood of their murdered parents. *Licinius Lucullus*, contrary to expreſs articles, put to death twenty thouſand of the *Caucæi*. What monſters were the *Roman* Emperors during Paganiſm! *Auguſtus*, having made himſelf maſter of *Peruſia*, offered up three hundred of the principal inhabitants at the altar of his uncle *Julius*. *Nero*, who had committed inceſt with his own mother, afterwards murdered her with the moſt hideous circumſtances of cruelty and treachery; and, after bathing the city in the blood of its beſt citizens, he ſet it on fire, that it might exhibit in fact what he ſung over its flames in his poem concerning the deſtruction of *Troy*. *Galba*, under a pretence of conſulting about their common

ſafety, aſſembled the inhabitants of three *Spaniſh* cities, of whom he maſſacred ſeven thouſand. *Caracalla* killed his brother *Geta* in the arms of his mother, who, although ſhe was wounded by the blow that diſpatched her ſon, ſoon after tempted his murderer, by wanton allurements, to marry her, which he did; and becauſe ſome citizens of *Alexandria* called him *Oedipus*, and her *Jocaſta*, he marched his army thro' *Aſia* and *Syria*, and, entering their city with all the appearance of a mild and peaceable diſpoſition, gave up its inhabitants to the ſword: nor did he ſtop the maſſacre, till that ſpacious and populous city was reduced to a deſert. It is with the greateſt juſtice that we look on *Tiberius*, *Caligula*, *Domitian*, *Commodus*, *Heliogabalus*, and by far the greater number of thoſe Emperors, as devils, rather than men. Had not the ten dreadful perſecutions, in which, by the moſt infernal tortures, they deſtroyed ſome millions of innocent and paſſive people, been exerciſed on Chriſtians, you would have eſteemed them the higheſt inſtances of cruelty, and wondered how either the light of nature, or the applauded benevolence of mankind, could have licenſed ſo mercileſs, and ſo tedious a ſcene of murder.

*Dech.* But you own theſe inſtances of cruelty were committed by the Emperors againſt their own principles.

*Shep.* Their perſecuting the Chriſtians was an effect of regard for their own religion. It was to gratify *Saturn*, who caſtrated his father, and devoured his own children; it was to obtain the favour of *Jupiter* the adulterer, of *Venus* the whore, and of *Mercury* the thief, that they thus made war on their Maker, and on Chriſt Jeſus, the author of purity and holineſs. Their other flagitious practices were, probably, reproved by ſome inward ſenſe of juſtice and humanity; and, poſſibly, by their very religion, abſurd and diabolical as it was, in the main.

*Dech.* Yet the elder *Romans* were, by the influence of that very religion, kept within the ſtricteſt bounds of virtue.

*Shep.* Not by the influence of their religion, but by their cuſtomary temperance, and the limited power of each citizen. This appears from hence, that when luxury was once introduced, and their governors became abſolute monarchs, no ties of nature, no fear of their gods, had any influence over them: yet after this people had been, for many ages, ſteeped in the moſt execrable and outrageous vices, Chriſtianity, in proportion as it prevailed, introduced a new face of things; inſomuch that, when the Emperors became Chriſtians, ſuch enormities, as I juſt now mentioned, were ſeldom or never heard of.

*Temp.* The Emperors before and after *Conſtantine* were, indeed, a very different ſort of men. Among the firſt there were but few good; among the latter few who were enormouſly wicked.

*Shep.* This experiment ſets before our eyes a wide difference between the effects of Chriſtian and Pagan principles.

*Dech.* The former had ſatiriſts, the latter encomiaſts, for hiſtorians.

*Shep.* The Pagan Emperors had Pagan hiſtorians, the Chriſtian had Pagans, as well as believers; and, beſides, had always an oppoſite party of Chriſtian writers to deal with, who did not fail to cenſure them with ſufficient freedom in their books; nay, ſome of them had holy men and hermits to reprove them for their faults to their faces, and Biſhops, who compelled them to do public penance for their crimes.

*Dech.* Kings and Emperors are pretty much alike in all ages and countries, and under the influence of all religions. Politics and pleaſure give them little time to mind the affair of religion, either internal or external. The people are likewiſe led, as to their principles, by the documents of their prieſts; and, as to their practices, by the example of the great. But he who would know how far nature is qualified to render thoſe who will attend to its dictates, and improve upon them, wiſe and good, muſt look for information on this head in the writings and lives of the antient philoſophers, with whom

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one of the greateſt fathers of the Chriſtian church wiſhed to take his fate in another world.

*Shep.* I cannot help differing widely with that father, becauſe, upon conſulting the writings of the philoſophers themſelves, together with their lives and tenets, as given us by their own Pagan hiſtorians, I find they knew little of true religion, and practiſed leſs. It was owing to the want of higher and better principles than the mere light of nature and reaſon can ſuggeſt, that the antient philoſophers, who carried virtue as high as it was poſſible without divine aſſiſtance, fell into the groſs enormities practiſed by the people they lived among. They made all the efforts human ſtrength was capable of, to find out the true object of worſhip, and came nearer to the diſcovery, in proportion as they had opportunities, by traveling into the Eaſt, of drawing hints from the ſtream of true tradition. And, after all, none but *Socrates* and *Plato* talked of one God, and that but obſcurely, ſpeaking, at other times, in favour of a plurality of gods, and recommending it to their diſciples to worſhip the deities of their country. However, it muſt be owned they lived, in the main, as if they had better principles of religion than their countrymen and contemporaries. They did enough to ſhew, that if they had been well acquainted with the true religion, they would never have taken long journies by land, and made dangerous voyages by ſea, to viſit the celebrated proſtitutes of their time; they would never have lett out their wives for hire, nor kept their miſſes, nor given the world the ſtrongeſt reaſons to think them guilty of greater crimes, than it was poſſible to commit with the other ſex. What a condition muſt the Pagan world have been in, when the antient philoſophers were eſteemed by their contemporaries, as the wiſeſt and beſt of men! Yet this muſt have been the caſe, or the youth of prime quality had never been committed to their tuition. Thoſe philoſophers, however, had, generally ſpeaking, little ſenſe of religion, and as little of moral virtue, or even decency. Many of them were Atheiſts, as *Diagoras*, *Theodorus*, and *Critias*. *Epicurus* denied the ſpirituality and providence of God, and

and ſo did all his followers. *Ariſtotle* denied his providence, as to this lower world. In the opinion of *Hippaſus* and *Heraclitus*, God was fire; in that of *Parmenides*, a mixture of fire and earth; in that of *Xenophanes*, a great impaſſible ſphere of matter. *Socrates* and *Plato* were, at leaſt in practice, Polytheiſts; ſo were *Cicero* and *Plutarch*, the latter holding, among a multiplicity of inferior gods, two ſupreme deities, the one infinitely good, the other infinitely evil. The *Stoics* believed God to be the ſoul of the world, and that ſoul to conſiſt in a ſubtil flame. They likewiſe held, with the poets and the vulgar, that God is ſubject to fate. Among the philoſophers there were three hundred different opinions concerning their ſupreme deity, or rather, as *Varro* teſtifies, three hundred *Jupiters*, or ſupreme deities. The followers of *Democritus* and *Epicurus* denied the immortality of the ſoul. *Pherecydes* and *Pythagoras* believed it to be immortal, but gave it in common to brutes, as well as men. The *Academics* were doubtful as to this important point. *Socrates*, *Plato*, and *Cicero*, who were more inclined to the belief of a future exiſtence, than the other philoſophers, plead for it with arguments of no force, ſpeak of it with the utmoſt uncertainty, and therefore are afraid to found their ſyſtem of duty and virtue on the expectation of it. Their notions of morality were of a piece with their religion, and had little elſe for a foundation than vain-glory. *Tully*, in his treatiſe of friendſhip, ſays, that virtue propoſes glory as its end, and hath no other reward. Accordingly he maintains that wars, undertaken for glory, are not unlawful, provided they are carried on without the uſual cruelty. *Zeno* maintained, that all crimes are equal; that pardon is never to be granted to one, who offends or injures us; and that a man may as lawfully uſe the utmoſt familiarity with his mother, as ſtroke her arm. It was not only his, but, likewiſe, the opinion of *Cleanthes* and *Chryſippus*, that the horrible ſin of uſing the male for the female is a thing indifferent. The two former taught, that ſons and daughters may as lawfully roaſt and eat the fleſh of their parents, as any other food. *Diogenes*, and the ſect of the *Cynics*, held, that parents have a right to

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ſacrifice and eat their children; and that there is nothing ſhameful in committing the groſſeſt acts of lewdneſs publicly, and before the faces of mankind. *Epicurus* allows of cohabitation with mothers and daughters. *Ariſtippus*, altho' a man of fortune, refuſed to maintain his own children, regarding them only as the ſpittle or vermin produced by his body; and as he placed the happineſs of a man in the pleaſures of a brute, ſo, to indulge thoſe pleaſures, he ſaid, a wiſe man might commit theft, ſacrilege, or adultery, if he had an opportunity. The virtuous ſentiments, diſcovered by the philoſophers on ſome occaſions, will neither palliate theſe execrable principles, nor ſuffer us to think thoſe who could abet them fit inſtructors for mankind.

*Dech.* It is not much matter what the philoſophers uttered by way of ſpeculation or emblem: he goodneſs of their lives is a ſufficient voucher for the probity of their real principles.

*Shep.* The very covering of an emblem ought to be chaſte and virtuous, leſt thoſe, who cannot penetrate to the kernel, ſhould be poiſoned by the ſhell. But that their principles were literally what I have repreſented them, their practices, which you ſo confidently appeal to, may fully prove. *Socrates* and *Plato*, the very beſt of them, have not eſcaped the cenſure of antiquity for crimes of the deepeſt dye. Great and good as they were, ſome foundation there might have been, for what they were charged with. *Plutarch* alſo repreſents *Ariſtotle* as a fop, a debauchee, and a traitor to *Alexander* his maſter. *Dion Caſſius* is as ſevere on *Seneca* the moraliſt. *Lucian*, as well as *Minutius Felix*, repreſents the ſages of antiquity as corruptors of youth, as adulterers, and tyrants. *Diogenes* kept a filthy ſtrumpet, with whom he lay openly in the ſtreets. *Speuſippus* was caught, and ſlain, in the act of adultery. *Ariſtippus* kept a ſeraglio of boys and whores, and yet took journies, at the peril of his life, to ſee the reigning courteſans of his time; nor was lewdneſs his only vice; he actually forſwore a ſum of money depoſited in his hands. *Crates*, and the female philoſopher *Hipparchia*, made a practice of ſtrolling from place to place, and lying together publicly

publicly before multitudes of people. *Xenophon* not only kept a boy, called *Clinias*, with whom he was guilty of unnatural pollutions, but practiſed the ſame execrable enormity with perſons of riper years. *Herillus* was a filthy pathic in his youth. *Cleanthes*, *Chryſippus*, *Zeno*, *Cleombrotus* and *Menippus*, committed murder on themſelves; the laſt, becauſe he had loſt a conſiderable ſum of money, which, as he was an uſurer, went a little too near his heart. That I do not charge the philoſophers with worſe principles and practices than they themſelves maintain, and their own Pagan hiſtorians aſcribe to them, any one may ſatisfy himſelf, who will conſult *Diogenes Laertius*, *Sextus Empiricus*, *Lucian*, *Plutarch*, and the works of *Plato*, *Ariſtotle*, and *Cicero*. Thus, gentlemen, I think it is plain, whether we conſider what the human underſtanding could do, or what it actually did, that it could not have attained to a ſufficient knowlege of God without revelation; ſo that the demonſtration, brought in favour of ſome religion, ends in a demonſtration of the revealed. When we attentively conſider the nature of man, we find it neceſſary he ſhould have ſome religion; when we conſider the nature of God, we cannot help concluding he would never have made a falſhood neceſſary to the happineſs of his rational creatures; and that, therefore, there muſt be a true religion. And when we conſider, that by our natural faculties it is extremely difficult to arrive at a right idea of God till he reveals it to us, that all the Gentile world hath run into the groſſeſt theological errors, and, in conſequence of thoſe, into the moſt enormous cuſtoms and crimes; and that no legiſlator ever founded his ſcheme of civil government on any ſuppoſed religious dictates of nature, but always on ſome real or pretended revelation; we cannot help aſcribing all the true religion in the world to divine inſtruction, and all the frightful variety of religious errors to human invention, and to that dark and degenerate nature, by the imaginary light of which you believe the right idea of God may be eaſily and univerſally diſcovered.

*Dech.* I cannot give myſelf leave to think, that an infinitely gracious God could have brought a ſpecies of creatures

creatures into being, deſtined to be extremely miſerable, if ignorant of their Maker, and yet, by nature, deſtitute of means to know him; or that, if he did, he could ſo long have with-held the external opportunities of that knowlege from them all, excepting one inconſiderable nation. I muſt confeſs, I have not credulity enough for ſuch an article of faith as this.

*Cunn.* Nor I, indeed.

*Temp.* It ſeems very ſtrange; yet flying to the light of nature will not relieve us from the difficulty, ſince wherever that hath been tried, altho' aſſiſted by ſome dark traditions and inſtructions, it hath miſerably failed.

*Shep.* It is true, that light, in the preſent imbecillity and blindneſs of human nature, is inſufficient; but God never left us altogether truſting to it, having communicated to us the knowlege of himſelf and his will thro' *Adam* and *Noah*, the common parents of mankind: but men becoming vain in their own imaginations, as St. *Paul* ſays, not only departed from the divine inſtructions, but, in a great meaſure, extinguiſhed the light of their own reaſon, whereby their fooliſh hearts were darkened. And, beſides, as they did not like to retain God in their knowlege, God gave them over to a reprobate mind: however, as we are told, he winked at the times of this ignorance; ſome compaſſion and indulgence, no doubt of it, he had for thoſe from whom, in after-ages, the idolatry of their forefathers had, in a great meaſure, cut off the neceſſary means of knowing him. This is further intimated to us, by what immediately follows; But now God commandeth all men every-where to repent; now, that better means of knowing him are afforded, he expects we ſhould return to the worſhip of him alone. From both expreſſions we may conclude, that God requires of mankind as much, but no more, knowlege than he hath given them means of attaining to. What the Heathens ſuffered in this world by their ignorance of the true God, was hardly a ſufficient puniſhment for their neglecting to make a right advantage of the means ſtill left them in the uſe of their reaſon, in the conſideration of his works, and in the imperfect theological traditions, handed down to them, in order to recover a right notion

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of God. But of theſe matters weſhall have a more proper occaſion to diſcourſe, when we come to conſider the laſt article of the Deiſtical Creed, under which, I ſuppoſe, Mr. *Dechaine* will not forget to preſs me with the late introduction of Chriſtianity.

*Dech.* I ſhall not; and, beſides, as the day is pretty far advanced, it is time to quit our chat. Mr. *Shepherd*, will you ſtep over, and dine with us?

*Shep.* I will wait on you, Sir.

*Dech.* If you ſtay all night with us, we will return to our ſubject as early in the morning as you pleaſe.

*Shep.* You may command me.

*The End of the Second* DIALOGUE.

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DIALOGUE

# DIALOGUE III.

DECHAINE, TEMPLETON, | CUNNINGHAM, SHEPHERD.

*Dechaine.* THE converſation of yeſterday hath not been out of my thoughts ever ſince, excepting when I was faſt aſleep.

*Shep.* A man left to his own hypotheſis, altho' it ſhould happen to be a little inconſiſtent with itſelf, is apt to think more uniformly, and reſt more quietly, in it, than in a better, after ſuffering it to be ruffled by the contrary reaſonings of others.

*Dech.* That is the caſe; for altho' you and I are ſtill firmly attached to our old opinions, yet, let the inconſiſtency lie on which ſide it will, we cannot ſo eaſily find out arguments to convince each other, as each of us can to ſatisfy himſelf. Is it not very ſtrange, that mere nature ſhould, on all occaſions, and in all circumſtances, tell us ſo plainly what is our duty, and enforce the performance of it with the moſt evident rewards and puniſhments, and yet that her dictates ſhould not be laws, for want of a known authority? I cannot help thinking, that the being and power of God over us are as clearly revealed to us by nature, as the rules of our behaviour. The former lie as open to reaſon, as the latter. But if the dictates of ſentiment and reaſon are not, in the ſtrict ſenſe of the word, to be admitted for laws, till God is known, and they are believed to be his dictates; yet they are certainly moral rules of action, binding us to the performance of theſe, and hindering us from the committal of thoſe actions; and therefore they are laws, tho' of a different definition from the laws of men. As our inquiry turns not on names, but on things, if reaſon and nature on all occaſions preſcribe and enforce our duty,

duty, that is enough, and we need not take up time in ſettling the meaning of a word, which every one is at liberty to define, according to his own way of thinking.

*Shep.* I ſhall readily allow you, and every body elſe, a right to define your own words, as you, or he, may think fit. Let us, however, have a law, or a rule of action, an inſtinct, a reaſon, or what you pleaſe, to act by; but let it be ſufficiently clear and cogent, to anſwer the end. I have already ſaid enough, I think, to ſhew there can be no law, properly ſpeaking, nor moral obligation, without the knowlege of God. I have likewiſe ſhewn, from the nature of our ideas themſelves, from our manner of coming by them, from the office and extent of reaſon, and from the theological errors and ignorance of all unenlightened ages and countries, that ſince the fall, in order rightly and effectually to know God, revelation is abſolutely neceſſary, at leaſt to the bulk of mankind.

*Dech.* If our duty on all occaſions is ſufficiently known and enforced, without inſtructions, or traditions, or even without a knowlege of God, this may ſuffice. As to revelation, it can only give us general rules for our moral conduct. It is reaſon that muſt interpret thoſe rules, and apply them to particular caſes. But reaſon can dictate, as well as interpret; and is at leſs trouble, and under leſs uncertainty, in applying her own, than foreign rules. If we muſt be taught to reaſon, which to me is a ſtrange poſition, to ſay no worſe of it, mankind, by comparing and debating, can teach one another, and improve their reaſon. Thoſe in whom reaſon is the leaſt improved, have a ſimpler and plainer ſet of duties, than thoſe whoſe faculties are more refined; and the improvement of reaſon keeps pace exactly with the calls for it. Place a man in what circumſtances you will, and his reaſon will tell him how he is to act. He knows very well what he would not deſire to have done to himſelf; and that he muſt be ſenſible is not fit to be done to another. Crimes of the deepeſt dye, ſuch as robbery and murder, are naturally attended with great abhorrence in all men, before committal, and with ſtrong remorſe afterwards.

wards. Leſſer crimes are accompanied with proportionable averſion and compunction, as the neceſſity of abſtaining from them is not ſo great. The rules for poſitive duties are as plain, and their enforcements as ſtrong, as in the caſe of negative. The reaſon of every man tells him what is a good, and what an evil action; and no man does a good action, but he finds a ſenſible pleaſure in doing it; no man commits a bad one, who does not feel the ſtings of conſcience, and a ſenſe of guilt, for ſo doing; and as good actions, and their rewards, as well as evil ones, and their puniſhments, ought to bear proportion to each other, ſo the aforeſaid pleaſure and compunction are always proportionable to the good or evil of our actions. Moral duties are upon the ſame footing with ſelf-evident propoſitions. As the one ſort bring their own light, ſo the other carry their obligation with them, and need not be taught. No man, for inſtance, need be told, that he ought to ſave the life of his fellow-creatures when he can do it with ſafety to his own; or, that he ought not unneceſſarily to aggrieve or deſtroy another. The fitneſſes of things are, in moſt caſes, ſelf-evident, and the duties reſulting from thence too plain to be doubted of by the meaneſt underſtanding. In nicer caſes the reaſons of duty are not hard to be deduced, and the duty itſelf is of leſs importance. Were it neceſſary to teach us moral rules and obligations, the Author of our nature, who never employs two cauſes or means to effect that, which may be brought about by one, would never have conveyed that moral knowlege to us by ſentiment and reaſon, which he intended to have inſtructed us in another way.

*Shep.* Two points you have here endeavoured to eſtabliſh; firſt, that the rules of our duty are evident to all men, without inſtruction; and ſecondly, that they are ſufficiently enforced by nature alone. Suppoſing the firſt to be true, altho' I can eaſily account for a man's acting, on particular occaſions, directly againſt what other men may take to be his duty, yet I can by no means account for his ever acting wrong, in important caſes, upon principle. Much leſs am I able to ſatisfy myſelf, upon your principle, how it ſhould come to paſs, that whole

whole nations ſhould have thought themſelves obliged to act upon oppoſite principles, in relation to life, death, property, &c. *Timoleon* killed his own brother in the life-time of their mother, in order to ſet the *Corinthians* free. This he took to be his duty; and the generality of mankind, placed in his circumſtances, would have thought that action an horrid crime. *Cato* killed himſelf, and, no doubt on't, thought he had a right to do ſo; yet the generality of mankind looked on the action as a ſin againſt his own nature and the community, which ſtood never more in need of his ſervices, than at the critical juncture, when he thought fit to deſert it. Mr. *Blount*, who wrote the *Oracles of Reaſon*, ſhot himſelf, becauſe his ſiſter-in-law would not marry him. In this he acted on principle, as well as *Acoſta*, who put an end to his life by the ſame ſort of inſtrument. If the bulk of mankind did not act on other ſentiments of duty, we ſhould have but a thin world of it. All true Chriſtians, and I hope I may add the Deiſts, think the *Jews* and *Pagans* were guilty of great cruelty in their perſecutions of the antient Chriſtians. Yet, immoral and barbarous as their conduct ſeems to us, they thought they were doing good ſervice to the cauſe of truth, and to the ſeveral objects of their worſhip. Papiſts think fire and fagot an excellent way of refuting Proteſtants, and hope to merit Heaven by a zeal hot enough to reduce their adverſaries to aſhes. This whole nations of them have taken to be their duty; witneſs the cruſades againſt the Proteſtants in *France*, the maſſacre of *Paris*, that of *Savoy*, and that of *Ireland* in 1641. Now the Proteſtants, where they have the upper hand, think it their duty to treat the Papiſts, and all other recuſants, with lenity and forbearance. One nation of men think themſelves obliged by nature to ſuckle and cheriſh their children with the greateſt tenderneſs. Another think it unreaſonable to bring up ſickly infants, to be a burden to themſelves and the public, and therefore throw them, as ſoon as they are born, to the wild beaſts. The people of one country think it their duty to prolong the lives of their parents with all imaginable affection and indulgence. Thoſe of another put their parents to death, when they

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are become infirm and decrepit, and feaſt themſelves on their fleſh. Numberleſs inſtances of oppoſition about the moſt important points of moral duty, not only in particular perſons, but between public communities, might be added to theſe; but theſe, I am ſure, are ſufficient to ſatisfy every rational thinker, that nature and reaſon do not, either by a elf-evident light, or by indiſputable deductions, tell every man how he ought to act, on all occaſions, and in all circumſtances. If the fitneſſes of things were ſo apparent, or did our moral duties ſo evidently reſult from thence, as you ſeem to imagine, ſuch glaring differences, about matters of the greateſt moment to private perſons and ſocieties, could never have happened. All mankind are taught from their infancy, and thro' the whole courſe of their lives, to look upon certain actions as right and fit, and on others as wicked or vile. Parents, maſters, converſation, dealings, human laws, *&c.* all join to teach them this difference, and frequently inſtruct them to place the right of actions, and moral duty, on oppoſite ſides. If this continual inſtruction, and the moral habits commencing from thence, and perpetually fed by it, were wholly removed, I cannot tell what would become of the moral ſenſe; but I am afraid it would dwindle away almoſt to nothing; altho' I will readily grant, that an unbyaſſed head, and an uncorrupted heart, will of themſelves diſtinguiſh between right and wrong, in very important caſes. And you, I hope, will as freely confeſs, that were this diſtinction as clear, as ſtrong, and permanent, as that which the eye makes between colours, which, to anſwer the whole purpoſe of morality, it ought to be, it could never yield to ſo groſs a tranſpoſition of right and wrong, as in the inſtances juſt now mentioned. As we generally ſee men knowing or ignorant of moral, as well as other ſorts of knowlege, allowing for the difference of capacity and application, in proportion to their opportunities, and the pains that have been taken in training them up; ſo we generally ſee them, making due allowances for difference of conſtitution and complexion, affected with greater or leſs degrees of love for virtue, and averſion to vice; nay,

we often find them even fond of vice, and averſe to virtue, avoiding the one with the utmoſt diſtaſte, and purſuing the other with the greateſt delight; and not only that, but reflecting on it, when over, not with remorſe, but pleaſure, according to the leſſons that have been given them, the examples ſet them, the company they have kept, and the courſe of life they have run through.

*Dech.* Do you mean by this, that actions are not, in themſelves, good or evil; and that there is no natural morality; but that the whole depends upon opinion and inſtruction, which in different places may eſtabliſh oppoſite rules of duty?

*Shep.* I mean, that moral duty ariſes intirely from the known will of God; that it is always conformable to the known nature and fitneſs of things, excepting when God, on account of ſome ſuperior fitneſs, unknown to us, orders it otherwiſe; in which caſe the fitneſs of the duty is to ſubſiſt only between the action and the expreſs will of God; that this exerciſe of the Divine prerogative, in diſpenſing with inferior fitneſſes, is to be eſteemed by us as a moral miracle; and that neither the ſentiments nor reaſon of man, aſſiſted by all the mere natural knowlege he can have of the fitneſſes of things, are able to give him a thorough view of his duty, which ought to be ſo clear by your hypotheſis, as not only to teach him, in all caſes and circumſtances, what is right, but, alſo, perpetually to prevent his imbibing bad principles of morality, his confounding right and wrong, or taking the one for the other. I am as fully perſuaded as you can be, that there is a law of nature; but the whole difference between my notion of that law, and the ſelf-ſufficient ſcheme you advance, conſiſts in this, that I call it the law of nature, on account of its conformity to nature; whereas you maintain, that its authority, its precepts, and its rewards and puniſhments, are clearly and perfectly made known by nature to the reaſon of every man, which you muſt excuſe me if I utterly deny.

*Cunn.* If ſome of the antients were very ignorant as to many parts of the natural law, others were as know-

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ing; and I cannot ſee why we ſhould take our notions of nature, and its lights, from perſons who ſeem to have degenerated into brutes, rather than from thoſe who, by following reaſon, thought and acted up to the dignity of human nature. The other *Athenians* had the ſame opportunities of coming at religious and moral truths, as *Socrates* and *Plato*; but not having the ſame candour nor attention, they did not arrive at the ſame attainments of uſeful knowlege. If men conſulted with reaſon and nature, and not with ſuperſtition and prejudice, about moral duties, they could ſcarcely go aſtray. I ſee all men knowing or ignorant, virtuous or vicious, in proportion as they follow the former, or the latter.

*Shep.* Thus the Deiſts argue, and thus you take it for granted, that *Socrates* and *Plato*, notwithſtanding their outward conformity with the religion of their country, were ſound divines; that they drew their right ideas of religion from their own internal light alone; and that all other Pagans might have done the ſame, had they not ſtifled the light of nature, and degenerated into a kind of brutes. If the firſt is true, theſe two philoſophers were a brace of errant knaves; if the ſecond, it muſt have been owing to their ſuperior capacities, as well as to their greater candor and attention; if the third, all other Pagans, not excepting the philoſophers and heroes of antiquity, muſt fall back into the rank of aſſes or ſwine. It is certain, Sir, that one man, by the ſtrength of ſuperior talents, can ſtrike more knowlege out of the ſame hints, or firſt principles, than another; and that prejudices, and corrupt affections, whether natural or adventitious, are great obſtacles to the purſuit of knowlege; but the want of firſt principles to build on, is ſtill a greater. *Socrates*, who never travelled out of *Greece*, nor, indeed, far from *Athens*, had nothing to erect a ſcheme of religion or morality on but the ſcattered fragments of truth, handed down from time immemorial among his countrymen, or imported by *Pythagoras*, *Thales*, and others, who had been in *Egypt* and the Eaſt. Theſe he picked out from an huge heap of abſurdities and errors, under which they were buried; and, by the help of a moſt prodigious capacity, laying them toge-

ther, comparing them with the nature of things, and drawing conſequences from them, found reaſon to queſtion the ſoundneſs of the *Grecian* theology and morality. But this is all the length he ſeems to have gone. He reaſoned extremely well againſt the prevailing errors of his time; but was able to form no ſyſtem of religion or morality. This was a work above the ſtrength of his nature, and the lights he enjoyed; and his philoſophy, like his genius, ſerved to ſhew him what he ought to ſhun and reject, but not what he ought to embrace. He ſeems to have been an inſtrument, in the hand of Providence, to beat down, or, at leaſt, ſhake, the errors of Paganiſm, that the maſter-builders, who were to come afterwards, might find the readier ground to erect the true religion and morality on. And this work he might have done to more purpoſe, had he not taught his diſciples to worſhip the gods, and ground the diſtinction between right and wrong on the laws of their country; in the latter of which he followed the ſaying of his maſter *Archelaus*, who taught, that what is juſt or diſhoneſt, is defined by law, not by nature. The notions of *Plato*, concerning the Divine nature, were infinitely more ſublime, and nearer the truth, than thoſe of his maſter *Socrates*. He did not content himſelf merely with removing errors; he ventured on a ſyſtem, and maintained that virtue is a ſcience, and that God is the object and ſource of duty; that there is but one God, the fountain of all being, and ſuperior to all eſſence; that he hath a Son, called the Word; that there is a judgment to come, by which the juſt, who have ſuffered in this life, ſhall be recompenſed in the other, and the wicked puniſhed eternally; that God is omnipreſent, and, conſequently, that the wicked, if he were to dive into the deepeſt caverns of the earth, or ſhould get wings, and fly into the heavens, would not be able to eſcape from him; that man is formed in the image of God; and that, in order to eſtabliſh laws and government, relations, made by true traditions, and antient oracles, are to be conſulted. Theſe points, ſo much inſiſted on by *Plato*, are far from being the growth of *Greece*, or his own invention, but derived from eaſtern traditions, which

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we know he travelled for, at leaſt as far as *Egypt*. He was wiſer than his teacher, who was a much greater man, becauſe his lights were better; but as they were not ſufficient, he ran into great errors, ſpeaking plainly, as if he believed in a plurality of gods, making goods, women, and children, common, *&c.* But pray, Mr. *Cunningham*, how comes it to paſs, that mount *Taurus* in *Aſia*, and mount *Atlas*, and the deſerts of *Barca* in *Africa*, make ſo great a difference between the knowlege and politeneſs of the nations dwelling on the one ſide of them, and thoſe of the nations dwelling on the other? Is knowlege progreſſive? And may it be ſtopped by a mountain, a ſea, or a deſert? The natural faculties of men in all nations are alike; and did nature itſelf furniſh all men with the means and materials of knowlege, philoſophy need never turn traveller, either in order to her own improvement, or to the communication of her lights to the world. How came it to paſs, think you, that *Scythia* did not produce ſo many, and ſo great, philoſophers as *Greece?*

*Cunn.* I really do not know. We have heard of *Anacharſis*, who came but little ſhort of *Socrates* himſelf; and perhaps that country produced many more, who, for want of letters and records, are unknown to us.

*Shep.* I think it is very evident whence the difference between *Scythia* and *Greece*, in point of learning and inſtruction, aroſe: the latter had the benefit of commerce with the *Phœnicians*, from whence they came by the knowlege of letters, and, probably, of navigation, and with the *Egyptians*, from whom they learned the greater part of their theology, policy, arts, and ſciences. Such advantages the *Scythians* wanted; and therefore, altho' their natural talents were as good as thoſe of the *Grecians*, they were not able to make any improvements in philoſophy. If *Scythia* had produced any conſiderable number of wiſe men, *Anacharſis* needed not to have travelled into *Greece* to improve himſelf in knowlege, nor had he been ſhot to death by his own brother for attempting to introduce the *Athenian* laws among his countrymen. If *Scythia* had abounded with ſuch ſages, *Anacharſis inter Scythas* had never become a proverb. If

I ſhould aſk you, why the *Aſiatic Scythians* are at this this day as ignorant as ever, while the *European Scythians* are little inferior to the other nations of *Europe* in arts and politeneſs, you would not, ſurely, ſay you did not know. As letters and records are the inſeparable companions of arts, ſciences, and knowlege of all other ſorts; ſo, had antient *Scythia* been as knowing as antient *Greece*, its diſtinguiſhed geniuſes muſt have improved the arts neceſſary to the recording what they knew, as well as the ſciences themſelves; and, conſequently, could not have wanted opportunities of leaving ſome monuments of their knowlege, by which poſterity might, at leaſt, have gueſſed at it. How comes it to paſs, Mr. *Cunningham*, that we, at this day, take upon us to approve the philoſophy of *Socrates* and *Plato*, rather than of *Epicurus* and *Ariſtippus*? The *Grecians* were divided in this matter, ſome following the notions of the former, and others thoſe of the latter.

*Cunn.* Reaſon vouches for the former.

*Shep.* Why did it not put the matter out of queſtion in their own times, or, at leaſt, immediately after? The infinite contradictions and uncertainties among the antient philoſophers produced the ſect of the Sceptics, who, while they kept within tolerable bounds, had more to ſay for themſelves than all the reſt. In reſpect to religion, *Socrates* and *Plato* either were, or pretended to be, Sceptics, beating down the abſurd opinions of others, but ſeldom building up any of their own, or, when they did, building on mere conjectures, or arguments ſuſpected by themſelves.

*Cunn.* The points in diſpute had not, in thoſe days, been ſufficiently canvaſſed, nor tried by the touchſtone of nature: this is a work of time, and time hath, at length, effected it.

*Shep.* Time, then, it ſeems, is an inſtructor, as well as nature and reaſon; but time hath taught the *Tartars*, *Africans*, and *Americans*, little or nothing of true theology or morality, even yet. Time of itſelf can teach nothing; it was the Chriſtian religion that opened your eyes and mine, nay, and thoſe of Mr. *Dechaine* too, and taught us the true principles by which we are enabled

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to examine the philoſophy of the antients, and by comparing their ſeveral opinions with one another, and with the truths of revelation, to decide in favour of ſome againſt the reſt. Men are very apt to take that for the ſpontaneous produce of their own minds, which they were early taught, and long habituated to; and to call that the effect of nature, which was inſtilled inſenſibly into them, before they began to conſider how notices and informations came in, or to keep any regiſtry in their memories of the times when this or that addition to their fund of knowlege was made. But any man, who conſiders the matter candidly, will find, that the principles of all he knows, concerning either the authority or nature of morality, were communicated to him by inſtruction, and that with ſome expence of time and pains, both to him and his teachers.

*Decb.* As one man is more ingenious at finding out truths of all kinds than another, ſo nations differ in the ſame reſpect, and make various advances, ſome briſker, and others ſlower, towards improvement; but ſtill thoſe who lie fartheſt behind, in their progreſs to moral knowlege, know alſo leſs of the temptations to vice; and the ignorance of vice anſwers the ſame end as the knowlege of virtue.

*Shep.* Moral knowlege does not then bring its own light with it, like ſelf-evident propoſitions; moral duties are not equally known to all men; nor do the circumſtances a man is in always plainly dictate to him what he is to do. It ſeems there is room for ingenuity to diſtinguiſh itſelf from ſimplicity, in finding out points of knowlege, which nevertheleſs, as they are, in your opinion, more neceſſary than even the informations given us by the ſenſes, ſo they ought to be, if poſſible, more univerſally evident and certain.

*Temp.* But pray, Mr. *Shepherd*, is there not a beauty in certain actions, and a deformity in others, independent of our opinion, which may ſerve very well to diſtinguiſh the one ſort from the other? And if this beauty and deformity are ſufficiently apparent to every man, and on all occaſions, will it not ſerve for a moral ſtandard,

and ſettle the difference between right and wrong upon a rational footing?

*Shep.* Do you mean any thing more by the beauty of an action, than the pleaſure you find in doing it, and the honour it reflects on you, when done?

*Temp.* No more.

*Shep.* Does not the deformity of any action conſiſt in the pain and ſhame attending the perpetration of it?

*Temp.* It does.

*Shep.* Are there not many men who take pleaſure, and glory, in ſuch actions as would put others to great pain and ſhame to commit?

*Temp.* There are.

*Shep.* Whence, think you, does this difference ariſe?

*Temp.* I believe, not from nature, but education and paſſion.

*Shep.* Our paſſions, however, are natural to us; and were the ſenſe of moral beauty or deformity ſtrong enough to anſwer the end, that is, were it as evident and irreſiſtible as our ſenſations of bodily pleaſures or pains, of ſweet or ſour, rough or ſmooth, no exceſs of paſſion, nor force of education, would be able to bring one man to differ with another about it. It behoves us as much to know the difference between good and evil actions, as between black and white; and yet it is impoſſible for paſſion, prepoſſeſſion, or any other cauſe of error whatſoever, to hinder a man who can ſee, from diſtinguiſhing between thoſe colours, or to raiſe any difference between the teſtimony of two ſeeing mens eyes about thoſe ſenſations. Men are taught from their infancy to think certain actions comely, and others diſhonourable; they are rewarded and commended for the firſt, puniſhed and deſpiſed for the laſt; hear all, with whom they deal or converſe, ſeconding the impreſſions made by their education; find the laws of their country backing thoſe impreſſions with all the force of temporal emoluments and puniſhments; and are made to believe, that the Supreme Being, or Beings, will approve and highly reward thoſe actions they have been taught to think beautiful, and purſue with vengeance ſuch as have been called vile and filthy. Theſe cauſes, perpetually working

working upon the mind, and coinciding with the natural conſtitution of things, can hardly fail to introduce an aſſemblage or firm connexion between the idea of this action and beauty, and the idea of that action and deformity; which aſſemblage, falling in with nature, and being ſtrengthened by habit, ſo that the one idea never occurs without the other, ſeems to ariſe intirely out of nature; and it is at length forgot, that either inſtruction or habit had any ſhare in its production. From hence, and from the pliancy of the mind to different or oppoſite moral impreſſions, it proceeds, as I obſerved before, that whole nations have placed duty on oppoſite ſides, in reſpect to the moſt glaring and important actions. If this does not ſhew, that the moral ſenſe is intirely acquired, it proves, at leaſt, that it is too weak to ſerve for a ſtandard of duty, and requires the check of ſome ſuperior principle.

*Temp.* The reality of a moral ſenſe, be its efficacy greater or leſs, can hardly be queſtioned.

*Shep.* What you call a moral ſenſe, is, in itſelf, only a ſenſe, and cannot, without any propriety, be called moral, until it is conſidered as a rule by which we are to diſtinguiſh between good and evil, in order to account for what we do. Man, as we formerly obſerved, hath, in common with all other animals, a ſtrong deſire to preſerve himſelf, to propagate his ſpecies, to cheriſh his offſpring, and loves thoſe who partake the ſame nature with him, merely as ſuch. If theſe are moral ſenſations, then brutes and inſects are moral agents. Now, Sir, it is much to be queſtioned whether there is any internal ſenſe diſtinct from theſe, as the mere natural beauty of all actions may be traced to a conformity with ſome one or more of theſe, and the mere natural deformity, to a neglect thereof. But, granting there is a natural ſenſe of beauty and deformity in actions, independent of theſe inſtincts, it is in itſelf nothing more than a mere mechanical or animal motion, like hunger, and can by no means denominate him morally good, who obeys, nor him morally evil, who acts againſt it, before it is conſidered as the will of a being to whom we are to account for our actions. Now this its exaltation

into a law it muſt borrow from ſomewhat ſuperior to itſelf.

*Dech.* And that is reaſon, by which the relation and fitneſs of actions to things are found out, and ſettled.

*Shep.* The ſame inſtances that prove the inſufficiency of the moral ſenſe to fix the diſtinction between right and wrong, ſhew as evidently, that reaſon untaught, and undiſciplined, hath been found not altogether equal to the taſk. The difference between right and wrong, among men, is fixed by their own nature, and the relation they ſtand in to God and one another, and cannot be changed upon us, but by the alteration of nature, or by the will of him whoſe pleaſure is our law. About this there can be no controverſy among reaſonable men. But that this difference is not of itſelf apparent to all men, is evident to common ſenſe and experience, inaſmuch as private perſons and communities, notwithſtanding their moral ſenſe and reaſon, have not been able ſo to ſettle the difference, but that they have run into moral principles and practices, in matters of the greateſt moment, directly oppoſite to one another. If in points relating to life and death, and ſuch as one would be apt to think moſt obvious, men have held ſuch groſs contradictions, it is no wonder to find them differ ſo widely in civil caſes, and matters of equity; ſuch as that between *Grotius* and *Selden* concerning the liberty of the ſeas, and a thouſand others, needleſs to mention, which the greateſt men have been unable to agree about. How often do we find the beſt chancery lawyers differing in opinion about one and the ſame ſtate of a caſe! When they deliver their ſentiments moſt peremptorily, they are only called opinions. Nay, the decrees given by the beſt judges in lower courts of equity are often reverſed, upon appeals in higher courts, altho' the evidence produced in both is the ſame. Thoſe who ſtand up moſt ſtrenuouſly for the univerſal clearneſs of the natural light, in dictating the rules of duty to every man, are not aſhamed to publiſh large treatiſes in defence of it, which muſt be highly needleſs and impertinent, if it is univerſally clear and evident of itſelf. Every man muſt ſee this evidence, if it is ſo glaring and univerſal, as well as they; but they are not content

content with demonſtrating the light of every man's own breaſt to himſelf, which, they tell him, is as clear as that of the ſun. After aſſuring him, that nature, on all occaſions, evidently points out his duty to him, they inform him what is his duty in numberleſs caſes; and, what is worſe, one of them frequently contradicts another, and ſometimes himſelf. They act, in this, exactly as the Quakers do, who maintain, that every man hath the Spirit of God within him, clearly revealing to him all that is neceſſary for him to know and practiſe; and yet take upon them to preach to one another. A Deiſtical book, and a Quaker's ſermon, are, in my opinion, two the moſt impudent abſurdities that were ever impoſed on mankind. All that which is called Deiſm and Quakeriſm, is taught by books and diſcourſes; and yet the Deiſt ſays Nature, and the Quaker the Spirit, ſufficiently inſtructs every man. The Papiſts ſay, there is a living and infallible guide in religious matters upon earth; but ſome ſay it is the pope, others a general council, others the pope and general council together, and others that it is the catholic church at large. The abettors of the law of nature are divided in the ſame manner about the internal ſource, or faculty, from whence they ſuppoſe it to ſpring; ſome deriving it from a ſenſe of moral beauty and deformity, others from reaſon, and others, again, from the former, under the check and direction of the latter. This is moſt amazing, that every man ſhould have a clear and powerful light within himſelf; and yet that he ſhould want to be told whether it ariſes from his head or heart; that there ſhould be any controverſy about the point or ſource, from which it ſends its rays, or that a man ſhould not be able clearly to determine, whether it is a ſimple ſenſation, and act of the mind, or a deduction of reaſon, that dictates his duty to him on all occaſions. Either there is no ſuch light, or it is far from being ſo clear and conſpicuous, as its ſticklers would have us think; for ſurely, if it were, we could eaſily perceive, or at leaſt they could plainly ſhew us, from what quarter it ſprings; and if it is kindled up and fed by nature in the breaſt of every man, they

need not be at the trouble either to kindle it in the minds of others, or to ſupply it with oil from their own.

*Dech.* There is certainly no need of either; but it is often neceſſary to remove the dark lantern, which the prejudices of many have placed about it.

*Shep.* No man, I believe you will grant, is born with prejudices; and yet every man, till he is inſtructed by ſome means or other, is very ignorant of his duty; and if the natural light of two men, or two nations, is not able to hinder them from being ſtrongly prejudiced in favour of the wideſt contradictions, in the moſt important points of morality and duty, if they cannot rightly inſtruct themſelves, or one another, if they can neither prevent or extricate themſelves from the ſtrongeſt attachments to oppoſite moral principles, I cannot ſee what great difference there is between having, and wanting, this ſuppoſed natural light.

*Dech.* That is, you can ſee no difference between having and wanting reaſon, and the other faculties of the mind.

*Shep.* Yes, I can perceive a wide difference between theſe; but it conſiſts in this, that a mind, void of apprehenſion, retention, and reaſon, would be incapable of receiving, retaining, or diſtinguiſhing knowlege from ignorance, and right from wrong, were the outward means of knowlege placed never ſo near it; whereas a mind endowed with thoſe faculties, altho' by nature it is void of all knowlege, is capable of receiving it, when propoſed; and, if ſufficient means of inſtruction are afforded to it, can diſtinguiſh in neceſſary caſes between truth and falſhood. This is a wide difference, Sir; and it is almoſt all I am able to diſcern in the matter before us. There is in this reſpect a ſtrict analogy between the human mind, and an opake body; each in itſelf is dark, but may be enlightened. Although the Moon, or any other planet, is not in itſelf a luminous body, yet by its poroſity it is fitted to admit ſome rays from the Sun, and by its denſity to reflect others; that is, it is capable of illumination.

*Dech.* For my part, I believe both men and planets were originally luminous, and have been ſince incruſted; theſe

theſe by an opake matter, and thoſe by tradition and ſuperſtition.

*Shep.* No, Sir, men were originally enlightened by divine inſtructions, and afterwards, thro' too high a conceit of their own abilities, fell into religious and moral darkneſs, their pride and corrupt affections interpoſing between them and the ſource of light, and ſo eclipſing their underſtandings, as to leave them but a faint glimmering of knowlege. *Horace*, who knew human nature very well, but did not know how mankind were created and inſtructed by their Maker, and fell in after-times into ignorance and barbariſm, ſpeaking of men, before all inſtruction and improvement, calls them, *mutum & turpe pecus*; which is near the ſame ſentiment with that of *Zophar*, who, after aſking *Job*, if he could by ſearching find out God, ſays, *Vain man is born like the aſs's colt.* The ſame poet proceeds to tell us the origin of laws:

*Jura inventa metu injuſti fateare neceſſe eſt.*

And a little after ſays,

*Nec natura poteſt juſto ſecernere iniquum,*
*Dividit ut bona diverſis, fugienda petendis.*

Here, altho' he miſtakes the true origin and authority of laws, yet he ventures to tell us from whence the diſtinction between right and wrong is not derived; that nature is unable to diſcern between them, as ſhe does between pleaſure and pain, and between ſuch things as are naturally uſeful and agreeable, and the contrary. St. *Paul*, in his epiſtle to the *Romans*, ſpeaks in much the ſame manner. *I had not known ſin*, ſays he, *but by the law. Cicero*, in the 5th of his *Tuſculan* queſtions, aſcribes the original of ſocieties and laws to inſtruction, and acquired wiſdom, which he calls philoſophy, and addreſſes himſelf to it in theſe words: *Tu urbes peperiſti; tu diſſipatos homines in ſocietatem vitæ convocâſti; tu eos inter ſe primo domiciliis, deinde conjugiis, tum literarum & vocum communione junxiſti; tu inventrix legum; tu magiſtra morum*

*rum.* In the third book of the ſame work, he aſcribes the neceſſity of learning and inſtruction expreſly to our not being able to diſcern nature itſelf. *Si tales nos natura genuiſſet, ut eam ipſam intueri & perſpicere, eaque optima duce curſum vitæ conficere poſſemus, haud eſſet ſane quod quiſquam rationem & doctrinam requireret.* *Plato*, in his firſt *Alcibiades*, takes a great deal of pains to ſhew the difficulty of diſtinguiſhing right from wrong; and after endeavouring to prove, that *a man knows not this difference of himſelf*, he then demonſtrates, that *the people are unable to teach it; and even that their leaders are ignorant of it; from whence proceed wars and battles among nations.* But, high as I carry my reſpect for theſe great men, I will freely own, that in my opinion they expreſs themſelves on this, and ſome other occaſions, more like poets and orators, or rather dogmatiſts, than men who had ſtudied human nature thoroughly, and were careful to expreſs themſelves preciſely; for nature and neceſſity could hardly fail, in length of time, and at a great expence of miſchief and confuſion, to diſtinguiſh good and expedient actions from the contrary, at leaſt in glaring inſtances. This diſtinction, however, being faint and dim, and when made, being either not at all, or but weakly, ſupported by religious ſanctions, muſt very imperfectly anſwer the great ends of a Divine law.

*Temp.* Enough I think hath been ſaid on this topic. All parents teach their children moral precepts of ſome ſort or other; which they need not do, if nature did it to their hand. But, no doubt on't, they find by experience, that altho' the world would teach them the difference between right and wrong, yet, unleſs they were early accuſtomed to hate the one, and love the other, they would make but very indifferent members either of families, or larger communities.

*Dech.* And does it not often happen, that they teach them right for wrong, and wrong for right?

*Temp.* Yes, certainly; but it does not follow, that becauſe ſome parents have taught their children amiſs, therefore others ought not to teach theirs what is good, ſince children of themſelves know nothing. I cannot help ſaying, that I never in my life heard a more wild

and

and extravagant poſition advanced, than that parents ought not to inſtruct their children in the rules of their duty, and the difference between moral good and evil. I every day ſee numbers of grown people, who, after a great deal of pains taken with them ſince they came to be men and women, have not yet learned this uſeful leſſon, againſt which their hearts, if not their underſtandings, ſeem to be ſhut up by rooted prejudices, and bad habits; which perhaps they had never contracted, if the ſeeds of virtue had been early enough ſown in their minds, and the principles of morality had taken the firſt poſſeſſion of their reaſon and affections. People may talk as highly of what nature and reaſon are able to do, as they pleaſe; but if I ſhould ſee a man ſo far carried away by a ſpeculative dependence on the mere aſſiſtance of nature, as to neglect the moral education of his children, I ſhould make no ſcruple to pronounce him ſtark-mad; and I am confident every mortal, except the inhabitants of *Moorfields*, would be of the ſame opinion with me.

*Shep.* In the cloſe of what Mr. *Dechaine* ſaid to us, about the natural and univerſal clearneſs of moral precepts, he obſerved, that God never employs two cauſes to bring about that which may be effected by one; and that therefore, as nature teaches us our duty in all caſes, it cannot be ſuppoſed, that God ſhould allow us any auxiliary inſtructor. As this argument was founded on his opinion, that he had clearly proved the natural light to be a ſufficient inſtructor in reſpect to the difference between right and wrong, and as we have ſince ſeen reaſon enough to think otherwiſe, there is no occaſion for a particular anſwer to it.

THERE is, however, another point, in regard to the law of nature, of equal importance with the two already conſidered; and that is, concerning the rewards and puniſhments annexed to it. Mr. *Dechaine* hath frequently made mention of the pleaſure attending a good, and the compunction ariſing from a bad action, as proceeding intirely from nature, as placing on all occaſions a manifeſt diſtinction between moral good and

evil, and as giving ſufficient weight and cogency to the ſuppoſed dictates of nature, which they always accompany. Theſe he ſets forth as the rewards and puniſhments of the natural law. But he is yet to ſhew us, that theſe pleaſures and pains proceed intirely from nature; that the firſt always follows ſuch actions as are good in themſelves, and the laſt ſuch only as are evil; and that they are ſufficient, without any additional ſanctions, to enforce the law to which they are annexed; or, if they are not, that nature gives us full and clear aſſurances of other rewards and puniſhments, more efficacious.

*Dech.* As to the firſt point, which you oblige me to prove, I own I am utterly unable to bring any arguments in ſupport of it. It is to me, and I thought it had been ſo to every body, ſelf-evident, that the pleaſure we take in doing good, and the pain or remorſe we feel upon doing evil, proceed intirely from the natural frame of our own minds, previous to, and independent of, all inſtruction or habit.

*Shep.* As this point is ſelf-evident to you, it will indeed be impoſſible for you to offer any arguments in defence of it. But, as it appears doubtful to me, I can produce ſome reaſons againſt it, over and above thoſe already offered, which, if they are brought againſt what you take to be ſelf-evident, you will ſurely be able eaſily to refute. Pray are thoſe pleaſures and pains, attending good and evil actions, equally ſtrong in all men? Or are they ſtronger in ſome, and weaker in others?

*Dech.* They are ſtronger in ſome than in others.

*Shep.* In what ſort of men are they ſtrongeſt?

*Dech.* In good mĕn.

*Shep.* How comes it to paſs, that one man is better than another?

*Dech.* It is partly from nature, and partly from habit; but by no means from inſtruction.

*Shep.* Don't you call him the beſt man, whoſe life is moſt conformable to the law of nature?

*Dech.* I do.

*Shep.*

*Shep.* He then, who hath the ſtrongeſt ſenſe of the rewards and puniſhments annexed to that law, is I ſuppoſe, the moſt apt to conform himſelf to it.

*Dech.* So I think.

*Shep.* It follows then, that men are made good or evil, in ſome meaſure by nature, and in ſome meaſure by habit.

*Dech.* How does that follow?

*Shep.* You ſay it is the greater pleaſure in doing good, and the greater remorſe in doing evil, that make one man better than another; and that it is partly owing to nature, and partly to habit, that men differ in goodneſs. As therefore ſome men are very regardleſs of the law, for want of a due ſenſe of its ſanctions, and as that want is confeſſedly owing to nature as well as habit, it follows, that nature and habit concur to make men evil as well as good.

*Dech.* Suppoſe I ſhould grant you this, what will you infer?

*Shep.* Only that ſome men are in part rendered wicked by the nature which you ſay God hath given them. If you maintain the premiſes, you muſt allow the conſequence.

*Dech.* I ſhall never allow it. I revoke what I granted, and do inſiſt, that, as to the motives of duty, all men are by nature put on a level.

*Shep.* You muſt then grant, that the wickedneſs of bad men is intirely owing to habit.

*Dech.* And what then?

*Shep.* If the wickedneſs of bad men is intirely owing to habit, the virtue of good men muſt be owing to the ſame cauſe.

*Dech.* That is no conſequence.

*Shep.* Do you not ſay, that nature puts all men on an equality as to the motives of duty, which render men good or evil according to the ſenſe they entertain of them?

*Dech.* I do.

*Shep.* The difference then between the good and bad man ariſes not from nature, but habit; and, conſequently, the virtue of the former is owing intirely to an habitual

tual and acquired pleaſure in doing good, and remorſe in doing evil, as well as the wickedneſs of the latter to the want of ſuch an habit.

*Dech.* But the wicked man, Sir, hath by wicked habits ſuppreſſed the ſanctions of the natural law; whereas the good man hath preſerved thoſe ties in their full ſtrength; and to this is owing the whole difference between them.

*Shep.* What could have induced the good man to follow the dictates of nature, and the wicked man to ſtifle them within him, ſince they ſet out at firſt on equal motives to virtue?

*Dech.* The latter, perhaps, had the misfortune to meet with bad education, bad examples, bad company; and theſe might have ſuppreſſed his natural love of virtue, and abhorrence of vice.

*Shep.* And might not the love of virtue, and averſion to vice, in the former, have been as much owing to an happy opportunity of being well educated, ſeeing good examples, and converſing with good men? Habit is that propenſity, or facility, which proceeds from long uſe, or frequent repetition; and by its nature is diſpoſed to the ſervice of virtue, as well as vice. But it operates with greateſt force, when it builds on a foundation already laid, either by principles heartily embraced, or inclinations ſtrongly turned before-hand to the ſame point. If all men had by nature ſtrong inclinations to virtue, and averſions to vice, theſe would at leaſt introduce them into a courſe of virtue; and that courſe would, in a little time, add the force of habit to that of nature, and confirm them virtuous; ſo that few or none would be vicious. But as the greater part of mankind are wicked, tho' ſome pains, more or leſs, are taken to make every one good, it ſeems rather probable, that men by nature love vice, and hate virtue.

*Dech.* That doctrine, no doubt on't, does great honour to their Maker.

*Shep.* But ſince it is a doctrine taught us by univerſal and undeniable experience, we cannot help ſubſcribing to it, and concluding that human nature is not as God made it. He that ſays it is, diſhonours God; and he that

that repreſents it as well-diſpoſed, as pure and perfect, as ſtrongly loving virtue, and abhorring vice, does little honour to his own ſenſe or ſincerity. All who have any ſhare in the education of children and young people, think in a different manner. They find an infinite deal of trouble in reducing within tolerable bounds their violent paſſions, their vicious appetites, their wild deſires, their froward and ſtubborn natures, which began to ſhew themſelves even in their firſt or ſecond year. Advice, commands, authority, promiſes, threatenings, rewards, corrections, and a thouſand ſtratagems, are applied with great judgment, vigilance, and aſſiduity, in the nurture of moſt children, and yet prove ſucceſsful in a reaſonable degree, only with a few. Is it not very ſtrange, that all the world ſhould take ſo much pains to teach that which all the world knows, whether it is taught or not?

*Dech.* But this knowlege does not lie on the ſurface of every mind. It is a rich ore, and worth the digging for.

*Shep.* If the labour of digging for it, and, after all, the uncertainty of finding it, ſhould be very great, nay, and if there ſhould be any danger of meeting with poiſonous vapours in the way to it, the leaſt encouragement would rather incline me to hope for it from above.

*Dech.* What, a ſhower of gold!

*Shep.* Yes, of metaphorical gold. But, as it is not all gold that glitters in the mental mine, we often ſee thoſe, who ſearch therein for hidden treaſures, miſtaking braſs for nobler metal.

*Dech.* Phoo; one cannot throw out a metaphor, but you whip it away, and run ſuch allegorical changes on it! You would have had a rare talent, had you lived in the primitive times, at the myſtical interpretation.

*Shep.* I only complimented you with an improvement on your own alluſion. The irregular and untoward diſpoſitions of children are but the natural prognoſtics of thoſe vices, into which, if good education and diſcipline do not prevent it, they never fail to ripen with age. That mankind are generally diſhoneſt and wicked, may be proved an hundred different ways. The older any man is, and the more knowlege of mankind his experience and dealings have given him, he is the more diffident and

diſtruſtful

diſtruſtful of thoſe he hath any thing to do with; that is, the more he knows the world, the worſe opinion he entertains of it. The exceſſive care taken in all writings and proceedings at law, to tie up the hands of parties, and prevent unfair advantages from being taken, ſhew how ſuſpicious men are of one another; and nobody but a fool will ſay their ſuſpicions are ill-grounded, or their caution needleſs. *Horace*, *Juvenal*, *Perſius*, *Boileau*, *Pope*, *Young*, &c. were keen and ſevere ſatiriſts; but, in my opinion, you, or any meaner lawyer, ſcourges the vices and villainy of the world with a much ſharper laſh in your writings. A deed of ſale, a marriage-ſettlement, or a bill and anſwer, expoſe the diſhoneſty of the world with ſuch truth and ſeriouſneſs, as infinitely exceed the moſt pointed wit. The vaſt length of ſuch writings, the preciſeneſs of every clauſe, the long ſtrings of ſynonymous words, *&c.* are, it ſeems, all little enough to defend juſtice againſt the many and artful attacks to be expected. There is, in ſhort, an univerſal corruption and depravity among mankind, ariſe it from whence it will. Now the things of the world muſt be ill contrived and fitted to us, if they are to blame for this. They continue as they were made, uſeful, or, at leaſt, harmleſs. Money, for inſtance, hurts nobody, is by no means the cauſe of fraud, rapine, or murder, altho' the love of it be rightly called, the root of all evil. It is, therefore, from within ourſelves, from the extreme depravity of our own natures, that all our wickedneſs proceeds. And that we bring the ſeeds and principles of this depravity with us into the world, appears more than probable from the indifferent influence, as to virtue or vice, of the things and circumſtances we are placed among, and the early diſpoſition to be pleaſed with what is miſchievous and wicked, and to hate what is reaſonable and good, which ſhews itſelf in children, as ſoon as their minds can contrive, their hands act, or their tongues ſpeak; and which, as I have already obſerved, it coſts thoſe who have the care of their education, an infinite deal of pains to break them of, in any tolerable degree, in order to keep them within reaſonable bounds. But, if a ſtrong approbation and pleaſure were,

were, by our natural frame, inſeparably attached to that which is morally good, and a ſufficient abhorrence and pain neceſſarily connected with that which is immoral, they could never change ſides as they often do, and make a good action the object of averſion, and an ill one extremely pleaſing.

*Decb.* Altho' the virtuous propenſities of nature are very ſtrong, yet they may be overcome by violent paſſions, and bad habits; in which caſe a different kind of pleaſure and pain from thoſe we have been ſpeaking of (which are purely conſcientious, and cannot be perverted), being excited in the mind, and prepoſterouſly annexed, the latter to good, and the former to bad actions, are miſtaken by you for natural and conſcientious ſenſations.

*Shep.* A mere habit of acting proceeds, as hath been obſerved, from the frequent repetition of the ſame action. But in the caſe of actions, which at firſt we are at liberty to do, or let alone, there muſt be ſomewhat previous to the firſt action of the kind, that induces us to do, and repeat it. Every habit of acting hath for its ſoucre ſome outward compulſion, or ſome inward inclination or averſion. Such actions as are purely moral, are alſo free, and compelled by no outward embargo. An habit of doing ill muſt therefore ariſe within, from ſome previous diſpoſition to evil. You may call this diſpoſition a paſſion, if you pleaſe; but if our paſſions are natural to us, then the evil diſpoſition is natural; and it matters not in the leaſt, whether you ſeat the natural love of evil in this, or any other, part of our nature. Much the ſame may be ſaid of our averſion to good actions. It cannot become habitual, without a long abſtinence from ſuch actions, and a frequent repetition of the contrary. But what was it induced us to abſtain ſo long from doing good, that it became an habitual object of our averſion? Could it be any thing elſe than a previous averſion to it, that with-held us from it? And could an averſion, previous to all action and habit, proceed from any thing but nature? You ſay, however, that this diſtaſte to good actions, and love of bad ones, is not at all of the ſame kind with thoſe conſcientious pleaſures and pains which you aſſign to the law of nature, as its ſanctions. Be it

ſo;

ſo; yet as they are found to ſpring from nature, in its preſent ſtate of degeneracy, they have as good a right to plead her authority, ſo far as it will go (which, upon your hypotheſis of following nature, is to the utmoſt lengths) as any other natural diſpoſitions of the mind. However, Sir, we have given inſtances enough of whole nations, that have placed the ſanctions as well as dictates of conſcience on oppoſite ſides. Men are often reproached by their own conſciences for doing that, which in itſelf is good, and comforted from the ſame quarter for doing evil. There is ſuch a thing as an erroneous conſcience; and our Libertines and Deiſts have rendered its dictates obligatory and ſacred by the doctrine of ſincerity, which, contrary to all their notions about the eternity and indiſpenſability of the natural law, hath fairly confounded or nullified all its precepts, and made the oppoſite natures of right and wrong interchangeable. If a man, ſay they, ſincerely believes in an opinion, and does an action, ſincerely looking upon it to be right, altho' that opinion ſhould be erroneous, and that action immoral, yet he is neither to be condemned of heterodoxy nor immorality; but hath all the merit of thinking rightly, and doing good. This they lay down as a fundamental, indeed as the only fundamental and neceſſary maxim, without laying much ſtreſs on the indiſpenſable duty of uſing all the means in his power to find out whether his opinions are true, or his actions right. If then the conſciences of men are ſo liable to be led, by the prevailing opinions of the countries they inhabit, into oppoſite ſentiments about moral duties; if they are ſo very pliant, and capable of ſo tranſpoſing their approbation and remorſe, as to annex the one to a laudable, and the other to a culpable action; and this not in a few perſons, but in whole nations, extremely populous and extended; either nature adds no conſcious pleaſures to virtuous actions, nor compunction to evil ones, or elſe ſhe does it ſo faintly as hardly to anſwer any end; which is nearly the ſame, to all intents and purpoſes, as not doing it at all.

*Dech.* You argue with me, as if I looked on reaſon to be perfectly uſeleſs to the purpoſes of morality, and unable

unable to diſtinguiſh right from wrong actions, or to direct the moral ſenſe on which ſide to adminiſter its rewards, and inflict its puniſhments. Were the heart left wholly to itſelf, it might indeed be biaſſed, and its ſenſe of good and evil tranſpoſed or preverted. But reaſon, judging of the relations between actions and things, and the fitneſs of both, is placed in a ſuperior ſtation to that of ſentiment, in order that, as often as it ſees that lower faculty inclinable, thro' paſſion, prejudice, or temptation, to miſplace its rewards and puniſhments, it may keep the moral ſenſe cloſe to the real fitneſs of things. Now, unleſs you will prove, that the very faculty of reaſon is acquired, you will be forced to own, that nature hath given us an ability to fix her rewards to good actions, and her puniſhments to bad ones.

*Shep.* Reaſon ſometimes admits of firſt principles that are falſe, and ſometimes deduces wrong conſequences from right principles. When ſhe is not only ſupplied with imperfect or erroneous notices, but alſo undiſciplined to a right exerciſe of her natural ſtrength, which is often the caſe, it is no wonder if ſhe ſuffers herſelf to be carried away by prejudices, and the lower faculties or propenſities of the mind to be perverted or miſled. Lord *Shaftesbury* himſelf is of the ſame opinion. *Few men*, ſays he, *are thinkers, and of thoſe that are, ſome are vaſtly leſs able to manage their thoughts than others* (*a*). Although, in the original frame of human nature, reaſon was the governing power or faculty in the mind, and ought to be ſo ſtill; yet, like a weak Prince, ſhe is in moſt men dethroned by her uſurping ſubjects, and that on account of her inability to enforce her dictates, inſomuch that, for once ſhe iſſues any orders of her own, ſhe is an hundred times either coaxed or compelled to lend her name and authority, as poor *Henry* the Third did, while in the hands of *Montfort* and the *Barons*, to the groſſeſt extravagancies, and the vileſt crimes; and not only that, but to exert all the little ability that is left her, to find out ways and means to execute, and falſe arguments to palliate, the exceſſes committed by the under-faculties, the inſtincts, the ſentiments, the paſſions and appetites,

(*a*) Miſcell. 5. Chap. iii.

appetites, to which ſhe is enſlaved. She hath not authority enough to prevail with the man of ſenſe, who alone retains any reſpect for her, to abſtain from the high-ſeaſoned, but unwholſome, morſel; nor from the third bottle, when he hath already drank one too much: yet, like an *Iriſh* proprietor, ſhe is full of her former grandeur, and, in proportion as ſhe is ſunk from her real ſtation and prerogative, affects to talk high of her rights and powers, as if they were much greater, and more extenſive, than, in truth, they ever were. She is ever giving proofs of her inability to determine points of the greateſt plainneſs, and yet preſuming to examine and pronounce moſt peremptorily about myſteries, and other matters, which, in her higheſt power and perfection, ſhe was utterly unable to form any competent judgment of. What is moſt abſurd, now that ſhe is fallen extremely low, both in dignity and ability, ſhe claims kindred with God, and ſays, it is ſhe that dictates to him all the wiſdom of his actions. To this preſumption ſhe is prompted by thoſe very imaginations and paſſions, to which ſhe owes her fall from her real dignity and ſtation; for of herſelf, weak as ſhe is grown, ſhe could never have been capable of ſo much folly and vanity.

*Dech.* I find you are no friend to reaſon, by your reflections; nor ſhe to you, by your arguments.

*Shep.* And I find ſhe is not to be humbled, at leaſt in you, to a juſt ſenſe of her own infirmity, which, as I take it, is the firſt neceſſary ſtep to the recovery of her original dominion. Were ſhe able rightly to direct the conſcience, and to affix its approbation to actions really good in themſelves, and its diſlike, even to the worſt of crimes, ſhe had never ſuffered, as I have already but too often obſerved, whole nations to offer human ſacrifices to their gods, to kill and eat their own parents, and the very wiſeſt and politeſt of them to deſtroy their own children, and feaſt their eyes, at their public diverſions, with the blood and ſlaughter of their fellow-creatures. If ſhe be not capable of approving the moſt horrible enormities, why does ſhe, in this late age of the world, when ſhe hath had time enough, one would think, to open her eyes, and come to a right ſenſe of religion and

morality, ſuffer the *Americans* and *Africans* to worſhip the devil, and even Chriſtians, contrary to the expreſs and repeated dictates of their religion, to hate, and perſecute, and burn one another for God's ſake?

*Dech.* Some people, as *Tindal* hath obſerved, endeavour to reaſon themſelves and others out of their reaſon. It muſt be owned, you don't deal ſo unfairly by her. You don't turn her own weapons againſt herſelf, nor abſurdly ſet herſelf up to perſuade people, with her own mouth, not to mind one word ſhe ſays. You only heap up reflections of your own againſt her, and wiſely endeavour to make us deſpiſe reaſon, in order to bring us over to Chriſtianity.

*Shep.* There is this difference, Sir, between your reaſon and mine, that yours is ſelf-taught and infallible, whereas mine is forced to ſeek for her materials from other faculties of the mind, to take ſome pains in acquiring the art and habit of reaſoning rightly, and, when all is done, is but too apt to err. Theſe defects, which my reaſon is modeſt enough to confeſs in herſelf, ſhe alſo perceives in all other men, not excepting the very Deiſts. Your reaſon claims privileges, and pretends to powers, under the preſent degeneracy of human nature, which mine could never have preſumed to aſcribe to herſelf in a ſtate of the higheſt perfection ſhe is capable of.

*Dech.* Yet, deficient as reaſon is, or may be, we have nothing elſe to examine the truth or falſhood of whatſoever is propoſed to us, or to determine this or any other controverſy with, but reaſon; and if that is ſo defective as you would repreſent it, all we are doing at preſent is but groping in the dark, all the reſearches of mankind after truth are vain and fruitleſs, and our Maker hath ſo conſtituted our nature, that error is unavoidable.

*Shep.* I inſiſt, again, the nature of man is not as God made it; the human underſtanding, as it came from the hands of its Creator, was equal to the ſtation or office aſſigned it: yet, altho' it is exceedingly debilitated by its fall, it ſtill retains a conſiderable degree of vigour: it is dim-ſighted, indeed, but not blind; it is like an eye that cannot diſtinguiſh objects clearly without the aſſiſtance of glaſſes. Reaſon could not have come ſo weak,

nor the paſſions ſo ſtrong, from the appointment of infinite wiſdom, goodneſs, and power. You ſay, reaſon is ſet over the lower faculties and propenſities of the mind, to regulate the operations of the firſt, and check the motions of the laſt. Our appetites and paſſions bid us enjoy, without confining us to a due diſtinction of objects, or to ſafe and moderate bounds. Our reaſon often preſcribes neither diſtinction nor bounds, and, when ſhe does, for the moſt part executes her office ſo weakly, that her preſcriptions are afterwards found by herſelf to have been wrong; and, beſides, are little regarded. Did God originally put this internal war, between reaſon and appetite, into our nature? Did he eſtabliſh oppoſition and contradiction in the minds of his rational creatures? Or did he give the government to reaſon, and yet render her too weak to hold the reins?

*Dech.* If the mind is at preſent ſo unhappily conſtituted; if, inſtead of an orderly government, there is nothing but anarchy within us; what then is to be done?

*Shep.* Reaſon is to caſt her eyes upon ſome ally, powerful enough to ſupport her againſt her rebellious ſubjects; ſhe muſt call in the fear of God to awe them, and the love of God to attach them to ſomewhat more worthy and attractive, than their preſent deſtructive ends and objects: and as for herſelf, ſhe is to learn from him the true remedy for her own defects, and the right method of preſerving her own dignity and power.

*Temp.* This, I think, gives us the true picture of ourſelves, and the true uſe of religion.

*Dech.* You ſay, Mr. *Shepherd*, that reaſon is to call on God. Do you not, in this, confeſs that reaſon knows there is a God?

*Shep.* Yes, Sir; reaſon knows there is a God; for he hath often told her ſo: he hath often revealed himſelf in perſon to her, and his works are ſufficient to convince thoſe, whom his revelations have been only related to, that thoſe revelations are true.

*Temp.* I think it is very plain, that neither reaſon nor ſentiment can ſufficiently fix the pleaſures, whether of conſcience, ſenſe, appetite, or paſſion, to that which is morally

morally good, nor their pains and averſions to that which is morally evil, without better lights, and greater ſtrength, than are to be found in the mere nature of man.

*Shep.* And if that is the caſe, we need not, by any other argument, prove the inſufficiency of ſuch rewards and puniſhments as are vague and undetermined, encouraging, indiſcriminately, either virtue or vice, to ſupport and enforce any law.

HOwever, altho' we ſhould even grant, that good actions are always attended with complacency of mind, and evil ones with proportionable remorſe; it ſtill remains to inquire, whether this complacency and remorſe are, for weight and degree, ſufficient by themſelves to deter mankind, in their preſent proneneſs to vice, from bad actions, and to incite them, under their preſent indifference to virtue, to good and regular lives. Is there nothing more required to enforce the Divine law, on the obſervance of which ſuch an infinite deal depends, upon the minds of a corrupt and degenerate race of creatures? We may ſafely anſwer, I think, that they are wholly inſufficient.

*Dech.* If you had left it to me to anſwer your queſtion, which, perhaps, you ought to have done, I ſhould have anſwered it in quite another manner. The moral ſenſe rewards our virtues with very agreeable, and puniſhes our vices with very painful, reflections. Theſe reflections are further authorized and heightened by the faculty of reaſon; but if both ſeem too feeble ſanctions, experience cannot fail to make up what is wanting. A regular and virtuous courſe of life is always attended, not only with inward complacency and peace of mind, but alſo with health and proſperity; whereas the contrary courſe produces nothing but remorſe, ſickneſs, poverty, untimely death, *&c.*

*Shep.* No doubt of it, when either happens, it is a great encouragement to virtue: and that ſo it generally falls out, I ſhall by no means go about to deny: but when it happens otherwiſe, when men ſuffer for virtue, or are enriched and aggrandized for their vices, then the experience of mere temporal events places your re-

wards and puniſhments on wrong ſides, ſo that vice muſt be embraced, and virtue rejected, in obedience to this beſt ſanction of the natural law. Now this is too frequent a caſe not to need a great and effectual remedy; and would be infinitely more frequent than it is, did not men generally ſtand in awe of much greater ſanctions, to be affixed hereafter, by an unerring judgment, to their good or evil actions. Pray, Sir, do you look upon the puniſhments, annexed to the natural law, to be proportionable to the violations of that law?

*Dech.* Yes, ſurely; for a diſproportion herein would argue a want of wiſdom, power, or juſtice, in God; who, having made his law a part of our nature, hath, with the niceſt regard to juſtice, annexed higher horrors, and deeper remorſes, to the committal of greater crimes, than to tranſgreſſions of a leſs heinous nature.

*Shep.* This rule does by no means hold in reſpect to the generality of mankind; for the old habitual ſinner, and moſt men are ſo in regard to one vice or other, feels leſs remorſe after the committal of the moſt enormous crimes, than the raw unpractiſed ſinner does after tranſgreſſions of a much more venial nature; ſo that the puniſhment annexed to the natural law is far from bearing a juſt proportion to the violation of it, the puniſhment growing ſtill leſs, as the crime, to which it is applied, grows greater.

*Dech.* But why do you aſcribe this to nature, when you yourſelf ſay it is the effect of habit?

*Shep.* Becauſe nature, left to itſelf, runs almoſt unavoidably into habits of wickedneſs; and, as faſt as it does, rids itſelf of its remorſes, which ought ſtill to be growing ſtronger and keener, as habit tempts it to greater enormities. From hence it appears, that ſome greater puniſhment, nor diminiſhable by the decay of the moral ſenſe, nor pointed out by the mere light of nature, ought to be expected, in order to prevent our falling into the groſſeſt crimes, or to make examples of us, if we do.

*Dech.* Perhaps, judging of other men by yourſelf, you are induced to believe they require ſtronger ſanctions to preſerve them virtuous, than are conſiſtent with moral freedom: Man, conſidered as a moral agent, ought to be

be free: and therefore the rewards and puniſhments, annexed to any law preſcribed him, ought not to be ſo great as to take away his freedom. Again, if he be free, he may do wrong; to deter him from which, the rewards of virtue, and the puniſhments of vice, ought to be preſent and certain; becauſe, if they are otherwiſe, he may happen to be little affected by diſtant and doubtful conſiderations. Now there wards and puniſhments we aſſign to the law of nature, exactly tally with this rule: they are moderate, and do not compel; they are immediate, and cannot be doubted of, or disbelieved.

*Shep.* The rewards and puniſhments of the Chriſtian law are future, and matter of faith, and therefore do not compel; they are alſo of infinite weight, and therefore, when firmly believed in, give force and dignity to the law of God, ſufficient to render it reſpected by men, bad as they are; and, of conſequence, bear ſome proportion to the end or purpoſe of the law, great and important as it is. Pray, Mr. *Dechaine*, hath God a kingdom?

*Dech.* Yes.

*Shep.* Is it of any conſiderable extent?

*Dech.* It is univerſal.

*Shep.* What proportion does the happineſs of any particular kingdom, or ſociety, here on earth, bear to the happineſs of God's univerſal kingdom?

*Dech.* Scarcely any; ſuch, only, as one ſmall part bears to a boundleſs whole.

*Shep.* Are the legiſlators of any earthly ſociety in the right on't to back their laws with human rewards and puniſhments?

*Dech.* No doubt of it, they are.

*Shep.* Are the laws of *England*, for inſtance, reaſonable and juſt in puniſhing certain heinous crimes, ſuch as murder, with death?

*Dech.* Very juſt.

*Shep.* You ſurpriſe me. The happineſs of this, or any other nation on earth, in your opinion, bears a moſt minute proportion to that of God's univerſal kingdom; and yet you inſiſt, that the natural ſanctions are ſufficient barriers to the happineſs of the univerſe; but add to them others of infinitely greater force and importance, in or-

der to ſupport the laws of a few men, united together in one little ſociety, merely for temporal conveniency. This, I think, ſeems very prepoſterous. If the laws of nature were ſufficiently clear, thoſe of ſociety need never, in caſes purely moral, tell us our duty; and if they were ſufficiently enforced, ſociety would have no occaſion to inſtitute other enforcements of much greater cogency, in order to their being obſerved. Nay, if the law of nature were, in the ſeveral reſpects of clearneſs, authority, and obligation, perfect and ſufficient, ſociety itſelf would be altogether needleſs. Men would obſerve juſtice, and practice beneficence towards one another, without adventitious obligations. A lover of liberty would not care to enter into ſociety to become ſubject to magiſtrates, to ſupport expenſive contributions, to tie himſelf up to burdenſome forms, and ſtoop to the will of others, if he found he could live independent, and converſe and traffick ſafely with mankind, in a ſtate of nature. The arguments, drawn from the ſuppoſed ſufficiency of reaſon and nature, to invalidate the neceſſity of revelation, prove with the ſame force, be it greater or leſs, that ſociety is unneceſſary. If the laws of nature be able to effect their own end, and that end is moral inſtruction and obligation; then, indeed, there can be no ſort of occaſion for other laws, neither divine, nor human: however, it will be worth while to conſider, whether the evil diſpoſitions and vices of men do not force them into ſociety; and, again, whether civil ſociety, conſidered in itſelf, is at all able to remedy the evils they ſeek to ſhelter themſelves from. As to the laws of nature, as they are called, if they could keep men honeſt and good in ſociety, there had been no need of aſſociating, becauſe they could have done the ſame without it, the ſociety adding nothing to moral knowlege or obligation, which are by nature perfectly clear and obligatory without it.

*Dech.* Make what you will of it, the law of nature is that which obliges us to ſtand to our compacts, both on entering into ſociety, and afterwards.

*Shep.* But I am ſure reaſon as ſtrongly tells us it is rank folly to enter into ſocial compacts, which may be extremely

extremely troubleſome, at leaſt if we can do as well without them. Were all men naturally juſt, humble, and beneficent, they might live very comfortably near each other, converſe agreeably, and trade ſecurely, without taking any ſureties from one another for good behaviour, without calling in laws and magiſtrates to guarantee peace and juſtice on all occaſions. We ſee that thoſe few men who believe one another to be ſtrictly honeſt, to avoid the unhandſome appearance of ſuſpicion, and the plague and expence of troubleſome forms, deal together in this very manner, and, inſtead of drawing bonds with extreme exactneſs, and calling in witneſſes, often make a ſecret of what they lend or depoſit: and thus would all men deal by all men, were it not too plain, that very few are to be truſted.

*Dech.* And hath Chriſtianity remedied the evil? Are bonds and witneſſes no longer neceſſary?

*Shep.* No longer, where-ever Chriſtianity hath really taken place; and where it hath taken only place in part, it alone gives all the ſtrength and weight they have to bonds, witneſſes, and other ſocial inſtruments. It is an oath, Sir, remember, it is an oath, that makes the evidence, and proves the bond. Your friend *Hobbes,* in the 26th chapter of his *Leviathan,* ſays, that *equity, gratitude, and other virtues, commonly called laws, are no laws, but qualities that diſpoſe men to peace, till they are injoined by a ſettled commonwealth; and that then they become laws.* And ſo far he is certainly in the right, that they cannot be laws, till ſome authority appears, to impoſe them as ſuch, which if it be divine, they become the laws of God; if human, they become the laws of man, or ſociety. It is from this ſuppoſition that man is, by nature, under inſufficient laws and ties, he deduces the neceſſity of compact and ſociety; but, when he repreſents mankind as paſſing from a ſtate of nature into a ſociety of their own contrivance, he forgets that, in his fourth chapter, he had aſcribed the origin of language to God, and ſaid expreſly, that *God taught* Adam *this uſeful invention.* Here he allows mankind to have ſprung from a common parent, which takes away the poſſibility of a ſtate of nature; and that God inſtructed

and converſed with *Adam*, which makes it impoſſible for mankind to have been without laws before they entered into ſociety. For if *Adam* converſed with God, he muſt have known him, and that knowlege muſt have produced obedience and duty to him. Beſides, when *Adam* was once inſtructed in the uſe of language, we cannot ſuppoſe the converſation between his Maker and him to turn on any thing ſo neceſſary as the laws by which he and his poſterity were to regulate their behaviour to the Supreme Governor, and one another. Our preſent Deiſts have found out laws of nature ſo excellent and perfect, that I cannot ſee what ſhould induce them to allow of ſociety at all. I really believe, when they come to conſider this matter more carefully, and to reflect a little farther, not only on the abſolute ſufficiency of their own principles, but, alſo, on what they are ſo apt to complain of, the heavy burdens laid on them by taxes, the infinite grievances ariſing from law-ſuits and partial ſentences, the ſcandalous jobbing of power, and purloining of public money, the cruelty and oppreſſion exerciſed by thoſe who are entruſted with the power of the ſtate over ſuch as are obliged to obey, the art and craft of politicians, who do but impoſe on the ſimplicity of the people, and that they may run ſnips with the prieſts in fleecing and tyrannizing over mankind, eſtabliſh one mode or other of revealed religion in every country upon the face of the earth; when they once come ſeriouſly to conſider this, and, at the ſame time, the perfect ſecurity, the delightful liberty, which the laws of nature are able to give them in a ſtate of nature; they muſt, of courſe, renounce their compact with ſociety; which they may do with the better grace, ſince it is impoſſible for the ſociety to prove any ſuch compact againſt them. I think I ſee them haſtening apace towards this free and natural way of life. They have already laid down the principles, which prove the eaſy practicability of the thing, and think and act, purſuant to them, for themſelves, as far as the laws of ſociety, by which they are yet hampered, will permit: and this is very far; for the laws of the land reach only to outward actions, and, even in reſpect to them, can be eaſily evaded by cunning and money,

money, or kept at reſpectful diſtance by intereſt and power. If a law ſhould come forth, although from a known authority, and conceived in the plaineſt terms, forbidding murder under the penalty of all that ſeverity which men are by nature diſpoſed to exerciſe upon themſelves, after doing ſuch an action; and injoining beneficence by a promiſe of all thoſe rewards which men, after doing good offices, are enabled by nature to confer on themſelves; it would be looked on as a burleſque upon laws. No, Mr. *Dechaine*; the man who is perſecuted for his virtue during the greater part of his life, and at length dies in its ſervice, is utterly unable to reward himſelf; and he who proſpers and triumphs in vice, who wallows in the gratification of all his ſenſes and paſſions, at the expence of other peoples eaſe and proſperity, perhaps of their lives, will be very unwilling to puniſh himſelf: and altho' education and religion may have given him a ſort of conſcience, which, on ſome occaſions, is apt to reprove his crimes; yet habit can conquer the effects of the firſt; and falſe reaſonings, helped out by the ill example of others, and ridicule, can ſtifle the latter. Gay company, muſic, and wine, are excellent opiates againſt the firſt attacks of conſcience, immediately after the committal of a crime; and remedies of leſs power will do the buſineſs, when time begins once to wear away the ſenſe of guilt; and as every former crime is a ſort of precedent for others of the ſame kind, a man, long accuſtomed to bad actions, commits them without any ſenſe of guilt or remorſe. Thus, Sir, ſin, inſtead of puniſhing itſelf with due juſtice and ſeverity, comes at length to ſcreen, nay, even to reward itſelf.

*Temp.* I cannot ſee the neceſſity of taking up ſo much time to prove a point ſo extremely plain, and agreed upon by all mankind, excepting a few ſpeculative people; as appears by all the laws and conſtitutions politic in the world.

CAN you not ſhew us, Mr. *Dechaine*, that nature gives us aſſurances of rewards and puniſhments in a future ſtate, more adequate than theſe you have mentioned, to the ends of a Divine law?

*Shep.* How can he do that, when it is his principle, that God never employs two cauſes, or means, for one purpoſe; and that the rewards and puniſhments, already mentioned by him, are ſufficient to enforce the law of God?

*Dech.* The Deiſts do by no means deny the rewards and puniſhments of another life.

*Shep.* They do as much in repreſenting thoſe of the preſent as ſufficient. In all they have publiſhed upon this head, they are ſo full of doubtful and evaſive expreſſions, that it is plain they labour to avoid an explanation, and to conceal ſomething that would give the world an ill opinion of them, were it laid open. They have actually objected to the puniſhments and rewards of another life, as ſet forth by the Chriſtian religion; they have trumped up others, and recommended them as adequate and ſufficient. This latter is the point they labour with the greateſt aſſiduity: future rewards and puniſhments are directly contrary to their whole ſcheme; firſt, as we can have no aſſurance of them, but by revelation; ſecondly, as their efficacy in this life, and their influence upon the actions of men, depend on faith, which they deſpiſe; thirdly, as they compel obedience, according to them, and render virtue mercenary; laſtly, and eſpecially, as they utterly deſtroy that liberty of thinking and acting for themſelves, which they ſo ardently wiſh and labour for. If they had the rational conviction, and real good of mankind, at heart, or were they, in themſelves, honeſt and upright men, they would ſpeak out on this important topic, and not diſingenuouſly endeavour, by ſlight and artful expreſſions, capable of double meanings, to bear their unwary readers in hand, and prevent their taking the alarm, till they have ſtolen into their minds ſuch principles, as, if once admitted and rooted there, muſt neceſſarily lead them, at laſt, to a diſbelief of all futurity. In this they act like the apoſtles of the great deceiver, and not like thoſe of our Saviour, who, in imitation of their bleſſed Maſter, delivered, with the greateſt plainneſs and fidelity, what they had received from God, tho' utterly repugnant to the riveted prejudices, and corrupt affections, of a wicked world; and

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died for the glorious cauſe in the moſt ſhocking tortures, but with the firmeſt aſſurance and hope of riſing again, and triumphing in it before the faces of angels and men. There is nothing more true, than that the dreadful judgment threatened to ſinful men at the great day of trial, is that very article of our religion, which hath made ſo many infidels, ſo many wretched deceivers of themſelves and others. Could theſe unhappy men follow their brutal pleaſures, and unlawful ſchemes, in this world, and hope on Chriſtian principles to eſcape the judgments of God in the next, we ſhould have no books publiſhed, nor jeſts crack'd over a bottle by way of arguments, nor florid declamations delivered in coffee-houſes, againſt the Chriſtian religion. Our own religion, were it ſuch as this, would be agreeable enough; and ſo many among us would not caſt a wiſtful eye towards Mahometiſm on account of the black-ey'd girls, and other ſenſualities, promiſed in Paradiſe to the faithful Muſſelmans by their artful prophet. *Tindal*, who, tho' he wrote like a Deiſt, lived and died like an Atheiſt, hath by his ſcheme given us all our puniſhments and rewards in this world, and laboured to prove them ſufficient. It is true, he hath here and there dropped a ſaving expreſſion concerning the happineſs and miſery to come, in order to prevent the offence, which doing otherwiſe might have given, and by that means keep his book open to a claſs of men, who deſire extremely to be deceived, yet are ſo delicate, that if they ſaw at firſt he was endeavouring to lead them into Atheiſm in effect, they would wholly lay him aſide. On the other hand, he takes much pains to inculcate ſuch principles, as, if true, would intirely render needleſs all accounts to be given in another life, of what is done here. He ſays expreſly, *That God never puniſhes for the breach of his laws, but in order to the good even of the guilty.* If this be admitted, we can never ſuppoſe the greateſt delinquent will be eternally puniſhed; and if no acts of ſin can deſerve eternal puniſhment, no acts of virtue, for a much ſtronger reaſon, can deſerve an eternal reward, eſpecially if what he and you all maintain be true, that virtue ſufficiently rewards, and vice ſufficiently puniſhes, itſelf in this life. In the third chapter of *Chriſtianity*

*as old as the creation*, he ſpeaks of future happineſs and miſery in ſuch a manner, that an unwary reader would be apt to think him of the ſame opinion with Chriſtians in reſpect to thoſe matters. But, upon conſidering his meaning attentively, it appears to be of quite another nature. He ſays, *God hath made our happineſs and miſery the neceſſary and inſeparable conſequence of our actions; that there are ſome actions naturally beneficial to us, and others hurtful; that there is no virtue, but what hath ſome good annexed to it; and no vice, but what neceſſarily carries with it ſome evil; that if our rational nature is to be the ſame in the next life, as it is in this, our actions muſt produce effects of the ſame nature, and that in a much higher degree, becauſe in that ſtate the pleaſure attending our good actions, being no-way impeded by diſeaſes and diſaſters, as it is here, will be intire; and the grief and miſery annexed to our evil actions, being diverted by no ſenſual things, will be inſupportable.* By this ſcheme, which gives us our rewards and puniſhments here, for what we do here; and our rewards and puniſhments hereafter, for what we ſhall do hereafter; he hath provided a ſort of ſalvo for himſelf in ſpeaking of a future ſtate, and future rewards and puniſhments; but he hath ſo ſeparated this life from the next, that nothing done in this is to be rewarded or puniſhed in that; the morality of the two worlds is kept diſtinct, and obedience to the Divine law provided for by temporal rewards and puniſhments only, without leaning in the leaſt on any hopes or fears of what may befall us hereafter. Will you be ſo good, Sir, as to tell us what you think of this new ſcheme?

*Dech.* I muſt own, I think it highly agreeable to reaſon to ſuppoſe, that God ſhould have ſo conſtituted the morality of this world, as to make it independent of the next.

*Shep.* And I, on the other hand, think it much more reaſonable, that man ſhould have an intire proſpect of his whole being and duration, that he may ſo regulate his actions and habits for the preſent, as to make them correſpond with the great things that lie before him. But ſince, as we have already ſeen, the main of our pleaſures and enjoyments here does not always lie on the ſide

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of virtue, nor the main of our temporal ſufferings, on the ſide of vice; and ſince, if they did, we have proved them inſufficient to make and preſerve us virtuous; it is abſolutely neceſſary, that greater rewards and puniſhments ſhould be provided in another life, and that they ſhould be clearly notified to us in this. It is no diſparagement to the certainty and efficacy of ſuch future ſanctions, that they are founded on faith, as you hinted a little while ago, ſince that faith is built on reaſons ſo clear, and aſſurances ſo ſtrong, that no man can be ſo certain of any rewards or puniſhments enacted by human authority, as he is, or may be, of thoſe annexed to the Divine law. It is no diſparagement to human laws, that the good ariſing from the obſervation, and the evil attending the tranſgreſſion of them, are always future in reſpect to our actions; nor ſhould it be any to the laws of God, that their ſanctions are ſet at a little greater diſtance, ſince there is ſo much ſtronger reaſon to expect them, than the rewards and puniſhments of men, which accidents, intereſt, death, foreign or civil wars, *&c.* may ſo eaſily prevent. *Shafteſbury*, ſpeaking of affections in his inquiry concerning virtue, pretty plainly maintains, *That the natural affections produce us a full reward in this life; that as natural affection is perfect or imperfect, ſo muſt be the content or happineſs ariſing from it; that perfect natural affection is in the preſent frame of our minds, and ſtate of things, attended with perfect happineſs; and imperfect natural affection with imperfect, but proportionable happineſs; and that to have the natural affections, is to have the chief means and power of ſelf-enjoyment.* In the ſame inquiry he aſſerts, *That remorſe, or conſcious puniſhment*, which he makes proportionable to crimes, or degrees of unnatural affection, *attends an immoral action, tho' it were ſuppoſed, that the perſon, who did it, believed in no God.* He ſays further, *Thus we have demonſtrated, that as on one ſide to have the natural and good affections, is to have the chief means and power of ſelf-enjoyment; ſo, on the other ſide, to want them, is certain miſery and ill. Here virtue is its own complete rewarder, and vice its own full puniſher, in this life.* Again, he ſays, after a good deal more to the ſame effect, *That the greateſt of miſeries*

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*accompanies that ſtate, which is conſequent to the loſs of natural affection; and that to have thoſe horrid, monſtrous, and unnatural affections, inhumanity, petulancy, barbarity, malignity, envy, moroſeneſs, miſanthropy, inhoſpitality, ſuperſtition, and unnatural luſt, is to be miſerable in the higheſt degree. He that hath the natural affections, is in this life happy in the higheſt degree; and he who hath the unnatural, is here moſt intenſely miſerable.* If this be really the caſe, there can be no ſort of reaſon to hope for or fear any other rewards or puniſhments in a life to come. Now all this he ſets forth as the mere reſult of things, as they are at preſent naturally conſtituted, without any reference, farther than what is neceſſary for an artful ſalvo, to the approbation or diſpleaſure of God, apprehended here or hereafter. In the concluſion of this inquiry he ſums up the whole, and aſſerts the ſame things over again; and in the two laſt lines he ſums up the ſubſtance of this ſummary, and ſays, *Virtue is the good, and vice the ill, of every one*; not the cauſe of the good, or ill, *but the very good or ill itſelf.* If the doctrine laid down in this treatiſe be true, all our rewards and puniſhments are confined to this life; and the goſpel, that brought life and immortality to light, hath done a vain thing. Having already ſeen, that thisdoctrine is falſe, let it ſuffice to obſerve, that not only *Tindal* and *Shafteſbury*, but likewiſe all the other Deiſts, ſpeak in the very ſame ſtrain, and lay down this as the grand fundamental doctrine of Deiſm, by which it appears, that Deiſm is nothing elſe in effect, but downright practical Atheiſm. It is needleſs to take notice here, that, as *Shafteſbury* is the moſt affected and conceited of all writers, ſo, in this treatiſe particularly, he labours to ſtrike out, and eſtabliſh, a new ſyſtem of morality, unhappily founded on a notorious falſhood; for good men are often miſerable in this world, and bad men triumphant; and on a ſilly hypothetical diſtinction between natural and unnatural affections, which hath no foundation in the nature of man, what he calls unnatural affections being only the exceſs, or depravity, or miſapplication, of the natural. But he, who cannot ſend out an old ſubject in a new cloathing, ſo as that the very ſubject itſelf may appear freſh

freſh and ſpruce, is but a poor polemical tireman, and can neither hope for applauſe nor proſelytes. To ſet a man's picture and name at the beginning of a book, with nothing new, ſurpriſing, or fine in it, excepting the mere picture, and titles, would be highly ridiculous.

*Dech.* Altho' the Deiſts have all imaginable reſpect for the incomparable performances of thoſe great men, Lord *Shafteſbury*, and Dr. *Tindal*, yet they do not think themſelves obliged to ſubſcribe to their opinions, unleſs when they are recommended by reaſon. It cannot be proved expreſly, nor, for aught I could ever ſee, by fair conſequence, from any performances of theirs, that they diſbelieved the rewards and puniſhments of another life; which as the light of nature is ſufficiently qualified to diſcover, we have all the right in the world to make them a part of the law of nature.

*Shep.* Yes; but then the law of nature won't be worth contending for. If we may be puniſhed in another world for what we do here, who knows whether it will not be eternally? And if that ſhould be the caſe, it will be every whit as ſhocking to foreſee it by the light of nature, as by that of revelation. The immortality of the ſoul, which it is neceſſary we ſhould firmly believe, before we can have any notion of future rewards and puniſhments, can hardly (St. *Evremont*, and moſt other judicious perſons, are poſitive in it) be diſcovered by the mere light of nature.

*Dech.* And yet Chriſtians, as well as others, draw ſtrong arguments from the Divine and human nature, independent of all revelation, for the immortality of the ſoul; and all nations have believed in it; which could ſcarcely have happened, had it not been an opinion extremely conſentaneous to reaſon.

*Shep.* It is certain, nothing can be more agreeable to reaſon, once the doctrine is propoſed, and thoroughly canvaſſed. But it is as certain on the other hand, that there is no one probable opinion in the world, which mankind, left intirely to themſelves, would have been more unlikely to have ſtarted. Who, if he were not aſſured of it by good authority, would ever take it into his

his head to imagine, that man, who dies, rots, and vaniſhes for ever, like all other animals, ſhould, notwithſtanding, ſtill exiſt? Or, after his body had been crumbled into the common maſs of matter, and undergone unnumbered changes and diſſipations, that it ſhould be raiſed again, and he ſhould revive into a new life of thought and action? It is well if this, when propoſed, can be thought poſſible, not to ſay probable, and eaſy to be believed. But to ſtrike out the thought itſelf, is ſomewhat, I am afraid, too high and difficult for the capacity of man. Beſides, it is worth obſerving, that when any ſuch opinion as this is broached, the arguments that ſupport it, always precede and point out the way to it. Now the only natural argument of any weight for the immortality of the ſoul, takes its riſe from this obſervation, that juſtice is not done to the good, nor executed upon the bad man, in this life; and that as the Governor of the world is juſt, man muſt live hereafter to be judged. But as this only argument, that can be drawn from mere reaſon, in order either to lead us to a diſcovery of our own immortality, or to ſupport the opinion of it, when once ſtarted, is founded intirely on the knowlege of God, and his attributes; and as we have already ſeen, that ſuch knowlege is almoſt unattainable by the preſent light of nature; the argument itſelf, which before the fall could not poſſibly have been thought of, is ſince that fall clogged with all the difficulties mere reaſon labours under, in finding out a right idea of God. Yet this argument, far as you are from being able to find it out of yourſelf, muſt be utterly inconcluſive, when diſcovered, to you, and all other Deiſts.

*Dech.* How ſo?

*Shep.* Becauſe you inſiſt, that virtue fully rewards, and vice fully puniſhes, itſelf in this world. Now, if thus it is, the juſtice of God can be no-way concerned to puniſh or reward hereafter; ſince every good action is ſufficiently rewarded, and every bad one adequately puniſhed, in the doing. As to what you inſinuate, that if the immortality of the ſoul were not evident to reaſon and nature, it could not have been believed in by all nations,

nations, it ſeems to me of very little weight; becauſe ſuch an opinion, once revealed and received, could ſcarcely have been forgot, or laid aſide. No parent would omit to tell his children a thing of ſuch infinite importance to them; or if he did, they would hear it every day from all perſons, whom they might have occaſion to converſe or deal with. However, if, in order to prove the doctrine of immortality natural, it is neceſſary to prove it to have been univerſally held, this ſort of proof will come to nothing, if we may believe antiquity; for *Herodotus* informs us, that of all the *Scythian* nations there was but one (if I remember, it was that of the *Getæ*, who were taught by their countryman *Zamolxis*, the diſciple of *Pythagoras*) that believed the immortality of the ſoul; on which account, ſays the hiſtorian, they were called by the other nations of *Scythia*, the immortals, probably by way of deriſion. The *Sadducees* among the *Jews*, and not only the *Epicureans*, but ſeveral other ſects of philoſophers among the *Greeks* and *Romans*, were firmly perſuaded, there is no life after this: nay, and *Socrates*, in the *Phædon* of *Plato*, ſays, *Moſt men were of opinion, that the ſoul, upon its ſeparation from the body, is diſſipated, and reduced to nothing*. And *Tully* in his firſt *Tuſc. Queſt.* ſays, *Pherecydes Syrus*, preceptor to *Pythagoras*, *was the firſt perſon, known to the learned world, who taught the immortality of the ſoul*; which upon your own principle needed never to have been done, had that doctrine been either ſelf-evident, or eaſily found out and proved by the mere light of nature. The other arguments brought by *Plato* and *Cicero* for the immortality of the ſoul, beſide that already mentioned, are very inconcluſive. They themſelves thought ſo. The latter ſpeaks doubtfully of the doctrine itſelf, and in his treatiſe of old age makes the elder *Cato* talk of it, as an opinion he was fond of, rather than as a doctrine he could demonſtrate; and comfort himſelf, after enumerating all the arguments he could think of for it, with this reflection upon the whole, that if the ſoul dies with the body, the petty philoſophers, who oppoſed themſelves to the opinion of the ſoul's immortality, ceaſing to be, as well as he, would not laugh at his credulity.

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The former, in his *Phædon*, makes *Socrates* ſpeak with ſome doubt concerning his own arguments, and introduces *Simmias* ſaying to *Socrates*, after having liſtened to his principal reaſonings, *We ought to lay hold of the ſtrongeſt arguments for this doctrine, that either we ourſelves, or others can ſuggeſt to us. If both ways prove ineffectual, we muſt, however, put up with the beſt proofs we can get, till ſome promiſe, or revelation, ſhall clear up the point to us.*

*Dech.* Is it not evident to reaſon, that a ſimple and uncompounded eſſence cannot be diſſolved?

*Shep.* Such an eſſence cannot periſh by diſſolution of parts, becauſe it hath no parts; but is it therefore impoſſible, that it ſhould ceaſe to be, in ſome other way, peculiar to the nature of a ſpirit?

*Dech.* You mean, I ſuppoſe, in a way analogous to diſſolution.

*Shep.* You may make a jeſt of analogy, if you pleaſe; but it is impoſſible to conceive the annihilation of ſpirit, or even of matter itſelf, by any other means, than by its analogy to diſſolution; and yet this does not hinder it from being moſt certain, that all created ſpirits and matter, as they had a beginning, ſo may have an end, if their Maker ſhall think fit; altho' it is utterly impoſſible for us, immediately or properly, to conceive how any thing either begins or ceaſes to exiſt. We can only figure thoſe peculiar acts of omnipotency to ourſelves by birth and death, or by compoſition and diſſolution.

*Dech.* Does not the dread of annihilation plainly intimate immortality to us? If we muſt ceaſe to be, why is this ſtrong averſion and horror ſo deeply rooted in our nature?

*Shep.* Don't all men fear death?

*Dech.* Yes.

*Shep.* Yet death happens to all men. The fear of any misfortune, inſtead of proving, that it will never befal us, is founded on ſome probability, that it will happen.

*Dech.* But our other fears are given us to keep off for ever, or as long as poſſible, the evils we apprehend; whereas this dread of annihilation can neither preſerve nor prolong our being; and we cannot conceive why

why it makes a part of our nature, unleſs it is becauſe annihilation, to which it is wholly repugnant, does not. Our nature cannot, ſurely, be ſo contrived, as to be moſt ſhocked at that, of all things, which muſt happen to us.

*Shep.* And yet if, as you obſerve, this dread of annihilation is of no uſe to us; nay, if it often fills our minds with gloomy and terrible thoughts; why is it made a part of our nature?

*Dech.* I anſwer, in order to intimate our immortality to us, that we may provide for our happineſs in a ſtate that is never to have an end. Try if you can aſſign a better uſe, and more agreeable to the point you are endeavouring to make good.

*Shep.* If the deſire of being, and the dread of annihilation, which I take to ariſe from thence, carried with them any real proof of our immortality, I ſhould be as ready to acquieſce in it, as any man. But I can ſee no more in this deſire and fear, than in many others. When we have been long accuſtomed to ſet our hearts on the expectation of ſome mighty happineſs, promiſed to us, any thing that damps or checks that expectation, fills us with ſtrong apprehenſions and fears. Mere being, conſidered in itſelf, and ſimply, is not the object of deſire. If happineſs is annexed to it, we deſire it; if miſery, we would be glad to ſhake it off. But as happineſs, without being, is impoſſible; we deſire to prolong, and dread to terminate, even a miſerable being; becauſe we pleaſe ourſelves with an imagination, that it may, poſſibly, be better with us hereafter. No man, I believe, would eagerly deſire being, and dread annihilation, if that being were to be void of all enjoyment, altho' it were, at the ſame time, free from all pain; much leſs, if it were ſubject to perpetual miſery. It appears, from hence, that it is not mere ſimple being we are ſo fond of, but being happy; nor mere annihilation we abhor, but the impoſſibility of all enjoyment neceſſarily annexed to it. The love of being is nothing more than the deſire of life; and the dread of annihilation is only the fear of death, in a mind taught and accuſtomed to hope for endleſs duration. All our paſſions of deſire graſp at an eternal fruitio

tion of their objects, and if indulged, run out to inſatiability and exceſs; and all our paſſions of averſion maintain an everlaſting enmity with their objects. Now as immortality is only life continued on for ever, and annihilation only total death; the ſame paſſion that bids us deſire life, muſt more ſtrongly prompt us to the love of immortality; and the ſame paſſion that excites in us a fear of death, cannot but fill us with ſtill greater horror, at the apprehenſion of ceaſing to be: yet, as our love of life does not prove to us, that life will never come to an end; and as the fear of death is no proof, that we ſhall never die; ſo the mere deſire of immortality cannot demonſtrably prove it, nor the mere dread of annihilation refute it, to us.

*Dech.* But can we ſuppoſe, that God hath given us any deſire, for the gratification of which he hath made no proviſion, even tho' we ſhould fix that deſire on its proper object, reſtrain it within due bounds, and ſo act, as not to deprive ourſelves of any original reaſon we may have had to hope for the enjoyment of what he hath thus by nature made deſirable? Surely the ſtrong deſire of being, or, if you will, of being happy for ever, could not have been ſo univerſally impreſſed on the nature of all men in vain, and for no end.

*Shep.* I am really of the ſame opinion; and that, therefore, this argument, for the immortality of the ſoul, carries with it no ſmall degree of evidence in favour of that doctrine: but it is only to thoſe who believe in God, and have right notions of him; who, as we have already ſeen, are only thoſe who have been taught to think and believe rightly of God. That ſo it is, appears from your own way of arguing: for, in order to enforce your reaſoning for the immortality of the ſoul, you are obliged to inſiſt on ſomething farther than the bare deſire of being, and averſion to annihilation, to inſiſt, that a wiſe and good God could not have impreſſed that deſire and averſion ſo ſtrongly and univerſally on the nature of man, if he had not intended immortality for man. This argument, therefore, draws all its force from revelation and inſtruction, and not at all from the mere light of nature; but the light of nature hath prompted *Plato* with

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ſome other arguments for the immortality of the ſoul, which I ſuppoſe you forget, or you would mention them, on this occaſion, as doing particular honour to that light.

*Temp.* What are thoſe?

*Shep.* He lays it down for a maxim, that *every cauſe produces an effect contrary to itſelf*; and *that, therefore, as life produces death, ſo death ſhall produce life.*

*Temp.* Nothing can be more falſe, or trifling.

*Shep. Cicero*, it is probable, was of your opinion; for, if I forget not, he omits this in ſumming up *Plato*'s arguments for the immortality of the ſoul. To prove that the ſoul will exiſt after it is ſeparated from the body, he endeavours to prove it exiſted before it was joined to it.

*Temp.* That, indeed, would prove the exiſtence of the ſoul to be independent on the body; but could never demonſtrate its eternity. But, pray, how does he prove its pre-exiſtence?

*Shep.* By endeavouring to ſhew, that what we call aptneſs in children to learn, is nothing more than memory; ſo that what they ſee or learn in this world, only revives the dim traces of what they knew in a former life.

*Temp.* Is not that a very weak argument, Mr. *Dechaine?*

*Dech.* It is, I own. The light of nature, however, is not anſwerable for every abſurdity of the philoſophers.

*Shep.* True; but the darkneſs of nature is; for I am ſure their abſurdities were not revealed to them. The ſame philoſopher ſays in his *Phædrus*, *That alone which moves itſelf, inaſmuch as it is never deſerted by itſelf, never ceaſes to move; but the mind moves itſelf, and borrows not its motion from any thing elſe; and therefore muſt move, and conſequently exiſt, for ever.*

*Temp.* Theſe are ſtrange arguments, and, in my opinion, incapable of proving any thing, tho' in the hands of the greateſt diſputant.

*Shep.* We have now ſeen, that the law of nature muſt be extremely defective, if it do not give us full aſſurances of very great rewards and puniſhments in another life, for what we do here; that this is impoſſible, without clearly

clearly proving to us, that our ſouls are imperiſhable and immortal; and that the light of nature hath been ſo far from doing this, that it hath ſuffered whole nations to remain for ſeveral ages in a perfect ignorance of this important truth; nay, and what is worſe, hath ſuffered the greater part of its moſt unerring oracles, the philoſophers, to deny it; and, to the reproach of ſelf-ſufficient and over-weening nature, hath put little into the mouths of thoſe few, that believed in it, almoſt *gratis*, to defend it with, but nonſenſe and ſophiſtry, altho' nature had done her utmoſt, and human literature had lent her aſſiſtance, to make them the greateſt men in the world. The wiſdom of *Socrates* and *Plato*, united, produce ſuch arguments for a moſt favourite opinion, as they themſelves are diſſatisfied with, and therefore call for more than human help. *Cicero*, being ſo fond of this opinion, that, as he ſays, he *would rather err with* Plato *in holding it, than think rightly with thoſe who deny it*, poorly echoes the arguments of *Plato*, adds little to them himſelf, and, at the concluſion, in a manner giving up the point, with all the arguments brought to ſupport it, he endeavours to comfort himſelf, and others, againſt the approach of death, by proving death to be no evil, even ſuppoſing the ſoul to periſh with the body. Thus, gentlemen, theſe ſanctions of the univerſal law, that ought to be moſt evident to all men, nay, to the moſt ignorant, are, by the boaſted light of nature, evident to no man, not even to the moſt learned. For how can it be evident to unaſſiſted reaſon, that the good man ſhall hereafter be happy, and the bad man miſerable, when reaſon is able, of itſelf, to produce no tolerable proof, that either of them ſhall be at all?

*Temp.* I am ſurpriſed, that *Plato* and *Cicero*, who were not far from thinking rightly of the Supreme Being, ſhould not have deduced the neceſſity of a future ſtate, together with its rewards and puniſhments, from the juſtice of God, the miſery of good men, and the happineſs of bad men, in this life.

*Shep.* Their philoſophy was wholly repugnant to this only demonſtration for a future life. They held, that the chief good conſiſts in following nature, placed it in this

this life, and made virtue its own reward. Theſe notions, which, in times over-run with errors of the moſt hideous aſpect, ſerved to put a better face on their philoſophy, made it as abſurd in them, as in our modern Deiſts, to eſtabliſh moral obligation on a belief in future rewards and puniſhments. And yet *Plato*, in his *Phædon*, actually does it; that is, notwithſtanding his making virtue its own reward, he aſſigns it another in the future life; but it admits of a better excuſe in him, who always founds virtue on religion, and makes them but one and the ſame thing, than in *Cicero*, who, in the fifth book of his *Tuſculan* queſtions, maintains, that *virtue of itſelf, in ſpite of all the miſeries to which human nature is liable, is ſufficient to make life happy*, and who makes a jeſt of the future puniſhments deſcribed by the poets, and believed by the vulgar, without ſubſtituting or ſuppoſing any others more rational. All this, however, does not hinder him from frequently referring the actions of men to the approbation or diſpleaſure of the gods, and even talking a good deal of the happineſs, which virtuous men will enjoy in another life. But neither he, nor even *Plato*, who fully aſſerts the eternity of rewards and puniſhments, in all their diſtreſs for arguments to prove the immortality of the ſoul, ever think of deducing it from the juſtice of God, and the manifeſt want of juſtice in this world. But, granting the immortality of the ſoul to be rendered by ſentiment or reaſon (I will not ſtay to aſk you which) ſo plain, not only to philoſophers, but to all men, without the leaſt inſtruction, that nobody can be ignorant of it; yet this will be far from fixing the future ſanctions of the natural law, and giving us ſtrong aſſurances of being hereafter glorioufly rewarded, or terribly puniſhed, for what we do here. A man who hath no inſtructor but himſelf, and ſees no authority or law above him but thoſe of his country, altho' it were poſſible for him to foreſee, that his ſoul will exiſt for ever; yet, if he is diſappointed of a reward for what he does here, and can eſcape from the puniſhment of his evil actions in this life, he will hardly dread the one, or hope for the other, in a life to come. As he is not ſure there is an infinitely wiſe, juſt, and powerful God, he will

will take it for granted, that death is an act of oblivion for all that is paſt; that juſtice and right, like all the other concerns of this life, are bounded by the grave; and that his ſoul is to paſs from this world to the next juſt as he does, who, quitting the laws and conſtitutions of one community, goes over to, and becomes a member of another, in which no cognizance is taken of what he did before his removal. How ſhall ſuch a man find out, that all his good and evil actions will be remembred; that rewards and puniſhments, proportionable to the ends of a law, on which the happineſs of the univerſe depends, will be conferred or inflicted on him; and that, in order to this, he is to be judged by a Being who is preſent every-where, who knows all things, even the thoughts of mens hearts; whoſe juſtice cannot be biaſſed, and whoſe power cannot be reſiſted, altho' the whole world ſhould conſpire againſt him? *Cicero*, with all his knowlege, gives but one lot to the good and evil in another life. It was his opinion, that *if the ſoul is immortal, it muſt be happy; if it periſhes with the body, it cannot be miſerable.* This conſolation he adminiſters alike to all men, without making any diſtinction; I mean in his *Tuſc. Diſp.* and his *Cato Major*; and conſequently, leaves moral obligation on a mere temporal footing, which, in effect, is not a whit better than downright Atheiſm. But, in his dream of *Scipio*, when he does not reaſon, nor ſeem to inculcate any particular doctrine, he indeed introduces the elder *Scipio* telling the younger, by way of dream, that *thoſe who ſerved their country, and cultivated juſtice and the other virtues, ſhould go to heaven after death*; but that *the ſouls of thoſe who had violated the laws of the gods and men, ſhould, after leaving their bodies, be toſſed about on the earth, and not return to heaven for many ages.* How inconſiſtent is this with what is ſaid, in the ſame performance, that *the ſoul of man is a God!* Can a Divine Being be wicked, and for its wickedneſs be excluded, for a long time, from the place of happineſs? It was this notion of the ſoul's divinity, that hindered *Cicero* from ſuppoſing it liable to eternal ſufferings, and induced him to aſſign it only a temporary and purgative excluſion from heaven; and that not ſo much by

way of puniſhment for the tranſgreſſion of a divine law, as in order to cleanſe it from earthly defilements, and refit it for its native habitation above. But if one ſhould aſk how the ſoul's being toſſed about on earth, for many ages, ſhould cleanſe it from the defilements of ſin, neither *Cicero*, nor any body elſe, could return a rational anſwer. Now if a perſon of *Cicero*'s abilities and learning could, from the light of nature, work out no better ſcheme than this, which renders futurity almoſt uſeleſs to moral obligation; how much farther from truth and reaſon muſt we ſuppoſe the bulk of mankind to ſtray, if each ignorant perſon is to be left intirely to his own thoughts and diſcoveries in reſpect to the future rewards of virtue, and puniſhments of vice?

*Dech.* Yet the Heathens, if we may judge by what their hiſtorians and poets have left us on record, did actually expect rewards and puniſhments in another life for what they did in this, and ſuch, too, as were of ſufficient weight to enforce the law of nature.

*Shep.* You cannot ſhew, however, that they founded theſe expectations on convincing reaſons or aſſurances, or their wiſeſt philoſophers would not ſo generally have made a jeſt of them, as they did. The odd ſituation, and the ridiculous circumſtances, aſſigned by the vulgar and the poets to the future judgment, and the happineſs or miſery to come, which ſet their whole ſcheme in a direct oppoſition to reaſon and common ſenſe, they drew from their own imaginations. As to the mere expectation of ſuch a judgment, and its conſequences, thoſe they could have borrowed from nothing elſe but tradition, or their notions of Divine juſtice; but as theſe latter taught them to believe in many gods, and thoſe as wicked and unjuſt as the worſt of men, the rewards and puniſhments to be expected from them were better fitted to pervert, than ſupport and enforce, the law of righteouſneſs.

*Dech.* You muſt grant, however, that *Plato*'s notions of future rewards and puniſhments were very juſt. They may ſerve to ſhew us what the light of nature, tho' left to itſelf, is capable of doing.

*Shep.* That philoſopher, who makes all religious knowlege to depend on revelation, either drew his theory of futurity from his travels into countries bordering on the light of revelation, and the hints of thoſe who were not altogether unacquainted with the ſacred writeings, and the religion of the *Iſraelites*; or elſe he refined it from the crude opinions of his countrymen; extracting and ſeparating, by the force of amazing talents, what was original and true, from that which was novel and ſuperſtitious. But upon your ſcheme, Sir, every man ought to have been a *Plato*. It concerned themſelves and others, as much as it did him, that all the reſt of the world ſhould have known the ſanctions of the divine law as well as he; and, in your opinion, they were able to find them out by their own natural light: but this we ſee, by experience, they could not do; and, after all, he, who alone was capable of ſpeaking rationally on the ſubject of future rewards and puniſhments, was not able to ſatisfy himſelf about the immortality of the ſoul, on which, of neceſſity, they muſt be founded. Yet, had he been never ſo able to convince himſelf, and convert all the world to his ſentiments; he came, however, too late upon the ſtage to be, in your opinion, an univerſal inſtructor.

*Dech.* Pray, Sir, is conſcience natural or artificial? Does it make a part, or is it a faculty, of the ſoul, as well as judgment or imagination? If it is, which I believe nobody will deny, its dictates muſt be natural; and as in all men it annexes hope to good actions, and fear to evil ones, it ſeems itſelf to bind over every moral agent to a future judgment, and its conſequences.

*Shep.* Deiſts, I know, talk much of conſcience, as a ſufficient rule of duty; and, by their doctrine of ſincerity, make the judgment of God to ſecond that of conſcience, even altho' it ſhould be wrong informed; which is the ſame as either to make all actions indifferent in themſelves, or, at leaſt, to place their good or evil nature, with regard to the agent, merely in his opinion. How they will be able to reconcile this with their ſentiments concerning the eternal and unalterable fitneſſes of actions and things, I cannot tell; but as to the hopes

and

and fears excited in the mind by conſcience, they proceed intirely from the lights, whether natural or revealed, which the mind is furniſhed with, of God, and his juſtice. Conſcience is not, itſelf, a faculty of the mind, but only that habitual judgment which a man paſſes on his moral actions, before he does them, and that remembrance of them after they are done, to which their conformity or non-conformity to his religious principles adds pleaſing or boding expectations. The conſcience cannot dictate, till it be itſelf informed; that is, no man can pronounce this action good, and hope to be hereafter rewarded for it; nor condemn that action as evil, and found on the committal of it the fear of future puniſhment; till he be furniſhed with ſome rule to cenſure his actions by, and have reaſon to believe he will be judged hereafter by that rule for what he does. Now we have already ſeen, that revelation alone can ſupply us with a right rule of action, and ſet before us a ſufficient authority to enforce conformity between our actions and that rule. As there can be no conſcience without religion, ſo the goodneſs of conſcience depends on the goodneſs and truth of the religion by which it is informed, and that again on revelation. Moſt men have been trained up in a belief, that God is preſent every-where, knows all our thoughts and actions, and will hereafter judge us for them. This belief, operating continually on the mind, and being ſtrengthened by its own reaſonableneſs, takes deep root, becomes natural, and adds pleaſing hopes, or guilty fears, to what we do. If we ſuppoſe a man habituated to no ſuch opinion, a man fed, but never taught, we muſt ſuppoſe him utterly void of conſcience, and as yet incapable of virtue or vice.

*Dech.* Do you not confeſs by this, that the good or evil of his actions, as ſoon as he acquires a conſcience, depends intirely on it? And ſurely, Sir, if conſcience depends wholly on inſtruction, he, whoſe conſcience is wrong informed, is not guilty of the evil he does purſuant to it.

*Shep.* All actions, ſtrictly ſpeaking, are right or wrong in themſelves. But men, being unable of themſelves ſufficiently to diſtinguiſh right from wrong, are liable to be

ſet aſtray by wrong inſtructions. He whoſe ignorance, for want of inſtruction, and he whoſe errors, by means of wrong inſtructions, lead him to bad actions, is excuſeable in the ſight of God, provided his ignorance and errors were invincible; for God will require no more of any man, than he hath been pleaſed to furniſh him with means of attaining to.

*Dech.* But I ſay, God hath given reaſon to every man, by which he is able to inform himſelf about ſuch things as are neceſſary, and to correct the wrong inſtructions that may be given him.

*Shep.* If his reaſon is able to teach him all things neceſſary for him to know, he can never ſtand in need of inſtruction, nor a preſervative againſt wrong inſtructions. But I think I have ſufficiently ſhewn, that reaſon itſelf ſtands extremely in need of inſtructions and preſervatives to prevent its falling into the groſſeſt errors, and leading us to the moſt enormous crimes; and therefore, till it is well inſtructed itſelf, it can be no proper inſtructor.

*Dech.* When right and wrong inſtructions are offered to any man, how is he to determine his choice?

*Shep.* By his reaſon.

*Dech.* Why then the dernier reſort is in reaſon after all, and that is the only inſtructor.

*Shep.* By no means. When two maſters teach you two phyſical problems, contrary to each other, and each of them propoſes and explains his demonſtration to you, it is your reaſon, no doubt on't, that determines you to cloſe with the one or the other; but it is the maſter, who lays the propoſition before you, who gives you the demonſtration, and who enables your reaſon to form the right judgment, or miſleads it into a wrong one. It is ſo in reſpect to conſcience. It paſſes no judgment upon actions, till the mind is furniſhed with ſome rule of action; and if that rule happens to be wrong, and reaſon, by the aſſiſtance of other lights, is not able to correct it, the conſcience, in that caſe, dictates what is wrong. Neither does the conſcience always add pleaſure or pain to the reflections we make on what we have done, till we are habituated to think this action comely and laudable, and that action baſe and culpable. Nor does it enter-

entertain the mind with hopes, or daſh it with fears, till reaſon is perſuaded there is a God, who watches over all we do, and will hereafter call us to an account for it.

YOU have aſſerted, Sir, almoſt in the words of *Tindal*, and the other Deiſts, that as God is a perfect Being, ſo his law muſt, in all reſpects, be moſt perfect; and that every man, by the mere light of nature, without the leaſt inſtruction, is able clearly and eaſily to apprehend it. But, upon conſidering the extent and ſtrength of the human faculties, we have found them at preſent utterly incapable of attaining to any competent notion of a divine law, if left wholly to themſelves. They have no innate idea of God, no congenite rule of action, no foreſight of rewards and puniſhments, impreſſed on them by mere nature. Nor is the reaſon of a man, left to himſelf, and utterly uninſtructed, able to trace out a right idea of God and his attributes, an infallible diſtinction between right and wrong, or ſanctions of force and validity proportionable to the important ends of an univerſal law. This argument, ſo clear and convincing to thoſe who are acquainted with the natural powers and extent of the human mind, is vaſtly ſtrengthened by an appeal to experience; from which it appears, that mankind, inſtead of being able, thro' a long ſeries of ages, by the mere light of nature, to find out a right idea of God and his laws, on the contrary, after having, without doubt, been well acquainted at firſt with both, gradually, and at length almoſt univerſally, loſt ſight of both, inſomuch that idolatry, as bad as Atheiſm, and wickedneſs, worſe than Brutality, were eſtabliſhed for religion and law in all countries. The philoſophers, who lived, and ſought, in the moſt knowing countries, for religious and moral truth, but ſought, as the wiſeſt of them confeſs, in vain, render this argument ſtill more cogent and concluſive. I need not be particular, in order to ſhew this, by recounting to you their infinite abſurdities, and eternal contradictions. Nor need I tell you, that *Pliny* ſays, man could know nothing without inſtruction; that *Plutarch* aſſerts, he would be the wildeſt of all the animals,

if left wholly to himſelf; that all the antient heathen poets, hiſtorians, and philoſophers, repreſent the firſt men as the moſt fierce and outrageous race of ſavages in all the woods; that *Plato* calls philoſophy, by which they were civilized, *the gift*, and *Cicero*, *the invention, of the gods*; that *Iamblichus*, obſerving the ignorance of human nature, *confeſſes there is no remedy for all its errors, but ſome portion of divine inſtruction or light*; that, as to moral obligation, *Plato* aſſerts, *there are no ſuch things by nature, as juſt things, inaſmuch as men perpetually differ in opinion about them, and are for ever contriving new ſtandards to diſtinguiſh right from wrong, and that therefore there can be no law, except God gives it to us*; that *Socrates*, *Ariſtippus*, *Diogenes*, *Pyrrho*, refer the diſtinction between right and wrong to the laws of ſociety; and that all legiſlators founded the obligation and authority of ſocial laws upon either real or pretended revelations. If you would have further ſatisfaction on theſe heads, and deſire to have it proved to you, that all the little advances made among the *Greeks*, in theology or morality, were derived from *Egyptian*, *Phœnician*, and *Syrian* traditions, either oral or written, and brought into *Greece* and *Italy* by *Thales*, *Pherecydes*, *Pythagoras*, *Plato*, and others, who travelled for their improvement

into the afore-mentioned countries, you may, at your leiſure, conſult *Gale*'s *Court of the Gentiles*, where unnumbered teſtimonies are drawn together from the writeings of the antients, to prove theſe points, and the paſſages, from whence they are taken, fairly and faithfully referred to. Thus, Sir, I think it plainly appears, that the ſecond and ſubſequent articles of your creed are without foundation; that thro' mere unaſſiſted nature, in its preſent ſtate of blindneſs and corruption, we can neither have a religion, nor a law, ſufficient to anſwer the ends of ſociety, or to render individuals good and happy; and that we may therefore ſay with *Cicero*, in his third book *De natura Deorum*, *If it is a thing agreed on by all the philoſophers, that no man attains to true wiſdom, we are all in a moſt wretched condition, altho' it is ſaid, that God hath taken the utmoſt care to provide for our happineſs; for as it is the ſame thing, whether nobody is in health,*

*health, or whether nobody hath it in his power to be in health, ſo to me there is no difference, whether no man is wiſe, or no man can be wiſe.*

*Temp.* Till now I thought there had been a law and religion of nature.

*Shep.* And ſo there is; but that law and religion, which are but one and the ſame thing, are rather to be called the law or religion of nature, on account of their conformity with the real nature of God, of man, and of the relation between God and man, and the circumſtances man is placed in, than becauſe they are ſufficiently manifeſted to all men by the mere light of nature, without the leaſt occaſion for inſtruction.

*Temp.* This, I think, you have made very plain.

*Cunn.* Mr. *Shepherd* ſeems not ſufficiently to conſider the texts of ſcripture that are againſt him, in relation to his long-laboured hypotheſis about the religion and law of nature*. St. *Paul*, in the ſecond chapter of his epiſtle to the *Romans*, ſays, *The Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, and, having not the law, are a law unto themſelves; which ſhew the work of the law written in their hearts,*

* Since the firſt edition of this work, the author, finding his explication of the following paſſages in the *Epiſtle to the Romans* cenſured, as forced and unnatural, hereby ſolemnly declares, he would much rather never have written a ſingle line in his whole life, nay, much rather have *never been*, than have wilfully wreſted one tittle of the Scriptures. It is for this reaſon, that, while diffident of himſelf, he ſubmits what he hath done to the ſenſible part of the world with meekneſs and fear, according to the advice of St. *Peter*; he humbly begs the thinking reader would conſider whether either the Holy Spirit, ſpeaking by St. *Paul*, or St. *Paul*, ſpeaking as from himſelf, could have intended to ſay any thing, that might make the world, as it then ſtood, think Divine Revelation unneceſſary to it. Let it be conſidered how difficult a matter it was to keep the *Jews* to the worſhip of the true God, and how much more difficult ſtill for the *Gentiles* to reſtore themſelves, by the unaſſiſted efforts of natural light, to the purity of that worſhip. Let it then be conſidered, what God hath done by Angels, by Prophets, by Miracles, by his Son, to plant the true religion in the world. Laſtly, let it be conſidered, that St. *Paul* firmly believed in all that had been done. And then let the reader aſk himſelf, whether, in the opinion of St. *Paul*, revelation could have been unneceſſary, or he could poſſibly have underſtood what he wrote as deſtructive of its neceſſity, as mankind were then circumſtanced.

*their conſcience alſo bearing witneſs, and their thoughts the mean while accuſing, or elſe excuſing, one another.* Here St. *Paul* ſpeaks plainly of a law written in the hearts of the *Gentiles*; and maintains, that they act by the dictates of that law. Now experience, which Mr. *Shepherd* ſeems to lean to more than Scripture, vouches ſtrongly for this aſſertion of the apoſtle: what can be more manifeſt, than that all men naturally hate robbery, theft, adultery, murder, and the like? which, altho' they may, on ſome occaſions, be tempted, by the violence of their paſſions, to commit, yet that committal is immediately followed by remorſe and ſhame. It is alſo as evident on the other ſide, that all men find a natural pleaſure and complacency in doing good. This difference between good and evil, ſo clearly pointed out by nature, and ſo remarkably diſtinguiſhed by rewards and puniſhments, is a law, a law of conſcience, as St. *Paul* maintains; which it can never be, according to Mr. *Shepherd*'s own doctrine, unleſs it is founded on the knowlege of God, and a ſenſe of religion.

*Temp.* This ſeems ſufficient to overturn all we have been doing in our laſt and preſent conference, if St. *Paul* is allowed to have ſpoken by inſpiration.

*Shep.* If he did, revelation was certainly neceſſary; for to what end ſhould a revelation have been made to men who knew, or could eaſily have known, the true religion without it? But if he did not, what he ſays on this ſubject muſt paſs for no more, than the opinion of any other man as knowing as he. You have told us, Mr. *Cunningham*, that St. *Paul* ſays, there is a law written in the hearts of the *Gentiles*; whereas he only ſays, *the work of the law is written there*, τὸ ἔργον τȣ̃ νόμȣ γραπτὸν, not γραπτȣ̃.

*Cunn.* And what then? Does he not ſay, they are a law unto themſelves?

*Shep.* Yes; but he ſays, in the very ſame ſentence, that they have not the law. If we are to catch at the preciſe meaning of his words, thoſe for me it is plain he meant literally, and thoſe for you are ſpoken in a metaphor; for no man can, in the proper and immediate

ſenſe

ſenſe of the word, be called a law; ſo that here I muſt have a great advantage.

*Dech.* Ay, if you allow the apoſtle to have contradicted what he ſays literally, by what he ſays metaphorically.

*Shep.* No, Sir, without any ſuch allowance. If by the law here ſpoken of we underſtand the moral law, enforced by natural religion, the apoſtle flatly denies that the *Gentiles* have this law; and only ſays, that they do by natural inſtinct the things contained in that law, which being their only rule of action, they are to be judged by it as if it were a law. But whoſoever conſiders the whole chapter muſt own, the law he here ſpeaks of is the law of *Moſes*, and the *Gentiles* he ſpeaks of are, by all the antient commentators, and moſt of the modern, ſaid to be thoſe who knew the true God, ſuch as *Melchiſedek* and *Job*, who lived before the law; as the *Ninevites*, who repented on a right religious principle, altho' they lived not under the law; as *Cornelius*, who was a worſhiper of the true God. Pray, Mr. *Cunningham*, have we not agreed, that religion is neceſſary to moral virtue, and the well-being of ſociety?

*Cunn.* We have.

*Shep.* And do you not allow, that the worſhip of oppreſſors, adulterers, and devils, would, inſtead of anſwering theſe good ends, be productive of wickedneſs, and prejudicial to ſociety?

*Cunn.* I do.

*Shep.* It follows then, that the apoſtle ſpeaks not, in this paſſage, of idolaters, and worſhipers of devils, ſince he ſays they ſhall be juſtified; for he, and all the other inſpired writers, condemn idolatry as a damnable ſin. Do you think, Sir, he will be juſtified by God, who is not pleaſing and acceptable in the ſight of God?

*Cunn.* By no means.

*Shep.* Therefore, by the doctrine of St. *Paul*, that Gentile, who does not believe in the true God, but adores, and conſequently imitates, the worſt of beings, cannot be juſtified by the law of God; for, in the eleventh chapter of his epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, he ſays, *Without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God.* Hence it

follows, that, if thoſe Gentiles, who worſhiped devils, are to be ſaved, it cannot be by any law, nor by any poſſibility of their pleaſing God; but by an act of infinite compaſſion, which God for Chriſt's ſake may extend to ſuch of them as were idolaters thro' invincible ignorance; yet, as to moral honeſty, choſe to follow the better dictates of natural inſtinct. *If there had been a law, that could have given life, righteouſneſs ſhould have been by the law; but the Scripture hath concluded all under ſin*; ſo that even ſuppoſing the Gentiles to have the law of God, you ſee they cannot be juſtified merely by that law, the very beſt of them having, in numberleſs inſtances, tranſgreſſed it. Wherefore, when glory, honour, and peace, are promiſed to thoſe of them who do well, it is plain, ſuch only are to be underſtood, as turn from the worſhip of devils to that of the true God, and endeavour to lead a good life, conformable to his will.

*Cunn.* And pray what uſe would you make of the conceſſion, in caſe I ſhould allow, that the apoſtle here ſpeaks only of believing Gentiles?

*Shep.* The uſe is eaſily apprehended; for you concluded from this paſſage, that the Gentiles, having the law of God written in their hearts, are juſtified by that law, if they act up to it; yet you ſee, by examining the paſſage a little more carefully, by conſidering the context, and by comparing what is here delivered, with what the ſame apoſtle ſays elſewhere, that he meant not in the leaſt to maintain, that the idolatrous Gentiles, who knew not God, have this law written in their hearts; and that he only intended to prove againſt the *Jews*, who appropriated the law of God and ſalvation to themſelves, that the Gentiles, altho' they receive not the written law of God, may, nevertheleſs, entertain his ſpiritual law in their hearts; which if a few, who had the benefit of inſpiration and inſtruction, did, how can this prove, that all the reſt, who were deſtitute of thoſe advantages, either did, or could?

*Cunn.* The apoſtle tells us how; namely, by nature.

*Shep.* St. *Paul* ſpeaks not in this place of what nature might have done, but of what was actually done agreeable to nature in a few; for he was ſenſible the groſs of the

the Gentiles were far from having the work, that is, the practical ſpirit and power of God's law, actually written in their hearts by the mere light of nature, ſince they either did not terminate their defective morality in religion; or, if they did, it was in a falſe and diabolical religion. I will not here inſiſt on what ſome commentators do, that the *Greek* word φύσις, for which we put nature, ſignifies in this place only cuſtom, as it does in ſome other parts of St. *Paul*'s writings; for inſtance, in the eleventh chapter of his firſt epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, where he aſks, whether nature does not teach, that if a man have long hair, it is a ſhame unto him. Here alſo our tranſlation puts nature for φύσις, which in this place can ſignify nothing but cuſtom. It is, however, worth obſerving, on this occaſion, that the *Greeks* and *Romans* took that which is now underſtood to be a law of nature, only for a law of cuſtom; for the former call that *ethics*, which the latter call *morality*; now ἦθος, from which the firſt, and *mos*, from which the laſt is derived, both ſignify cuſtom only. As to what you ſaid awhile ago, that experience vouches for the doctrine drawn by your interpretation from this paſſage, I need only put you in mind, that our appeal to experience is over, that the arguments deducible from thence are againſt you, and that experience concurs in this matter exactly with the language of Scripture throughout, and with what St. *Paul* inculcates in other places, which admit of no interpretation, but ſuch as is contrary to that, which you and the Deiſts put on this. Beſides, Sir, you ought a little better to conſider, what ſort of experience it is you appeal to. All men, you ſay, approve of virtue, and abhor vice. But I ſay, all men are taught to do ſo by the laws of their own country, by the inſtructions of their parents, and by the converſation of all their acquaintances, from their very infancy; yet many, in ſpite of all this, and of the real conformity of virtue to the nature of things, abhor virtue, and love vice; ſo dim is the light of nature, and ſo feeble is the moral ſenſe.

*Cunn.* Pray, Sir, are not even the idolatrous Gentiles to be judged by God?

*Shep.* They are.

*Cunn.* Muſt they not be judged by ſome law?

*Shep.* They muſt, as St. *Paul* ſays, be judged without law, that is, without the law of *Moſes*, or any Divine law, in the literal and proper ſenſe of the words. When a law is ſufficiently promulgated, if the ſubjects know it, they are to be judged by it; if they do not, they are to be condemned for their ignorance of it, at leaſt in caſe they tranſgreſs it. So far as the Heathens knew the will of God, or might have known it, they are accountable to him.

*Cunn.* But you ſeem to think they could not have known it at all.

*Shep.* You wrong me, Sir; I only inſiſted, that it was extremely difficult for them to have a right idea of God, and his will; not that it was impoſſible. But, from natural reaſon and ſentiment, the groſſeſt idolaters had ſome notion of the difference between a very good and a very bad action; diſliked the one, and approved the other. They had moreover, from tradition, ſome notion of a ſuperior nature, altho' very defective and erroneous. How far any one among them might have advanced, upon the ſtrength of theſe notices, towards a tolerable ſyſtem of duty, God only knows; and therefore God only can judge them. From thence I think it reaſonable to conclude, that, altho' God hath not comprehended them in the ſcheme of ſalvation by covenant; yet thoſe of them may ſtand in his ſight as objects of his mercy, thro' the extenſive merits of Chriſt, who made the beſt uſe they could of the lights they enjoyed.

*Dech.* As objects of his juſtice rather, if they muſt account rigorouſly for their opportunities.

*Shep.* I do not think they will be judged with rigour, altho' mercy is promiſed only thro' faith to Chriſtians. But, in caſes of this nature, I look upon it to be our duty, on the one hand, to know what God hath declared, and, on the other, to ſuſpend our opinions, where he hath been pleaſed to terminate his declarations. When God is ſilent, it becomes us to be ſo too. You cannot deny it, nor I aſſign the providential reaſon for it; but ſo it is in fact, that the illiterate Chriſtian is, in regard to the knowlege of natural religion and morality, upon an

an infinitely better footing, than the moſt knowing Pagan.

*Cunn.* The Divine nature and attributes, and of conſequence our duty on all occaſions, are more eaſily diſcoverable by the light of nature, than you are aware of. St. *Paul* ſays, in the firſt chapter of his epiſtle to the *Romans, That which may be known of God, is manifeſt in*, or *to, them*; namely, to all mankind; *for God hath ſhewed it unto them. For the inviſible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.*

*Shep.* Do you infer from hence, that all mankind could have eaſily arrived at a right notion of God, merely by contemplating the works of creation?

*Cunn.* Moſt certainly.

*Shep.* What! even thoſe who were born in countries where nothing but idolatry had long prevailed?

*Cunn.* Even thoſe.

*Shep.* How came it to paſs then, that none of them ever did?

*Cunn.* I only inſiſt on the words of the apoſtle. Pleaſe to ſhew they do not make directly againſt you.

*Shep.* This doctrine, if true, will damn all the Heathen; for St. *Paul*, after the words you have repeated, ſays, *So that they are without excuſe.*

*Dech.* Never trouble yourſelf with the conſequence. Do you allow the premiſes?

*Shep.* Sir, if the premiſes neceſſarily lead to this concluſion, the abetters of the ſelf-ſufficient ſcheme will be more concerned than I, to conſider whether Mr. *Cunningham* hath put a right interpretation on the apoſtle's words, or not; becauſe, if they are taken preciſely in his ſenſe, Deiſm muſt be a dreadful truth. If all the Heathen had full and ſufficient means of knowing God by the mere light of nature; and if, notwithſtanding, they continued all their lives worſhiping ſtocks, ſtones, and devils; what will become of them?

*Dech.* Bleſs us all! you are in mighty pain about the Heathen. If *Paul* damns them all, what is that to me, who believe them to be on as good a footing for ſalvation, as himſelf?

*Shep.*

*Shep.* It does concern you not a little, ſince you hold the ſame damnatory doctrine which you have aſcribed to St. *Paul*. If, as you maintain, every Heathen had ſufficient means of knowing God, and his duty; and if every Heathen, notwithſtanding, through a neglect of thoſe means, was groſly ignorant of both; it follows, that every Heathen muſt be damned for wilfully ſinning againſt, or ſtifling the clear light of his own nature. But Mr. *Cunningham* is not only concerned to refute this doctrine he hath adopted, but likewiſe to vindicate St. *Paul* againſt all who ſhall charge him with holding an opinion, which, upon Mr. *Cunningham*'s own principles, muſt be very ſhocking. Wherefore, I own, the ſtreſs of this argument lies rather on him, than you. Pray, Mr. *Cunningham*, do you think, St. *Paul* intended by this paſſage to ſhew, that revelation is abſolutely uſeleſs?

*Cunn.* I mean no ſuch thing, Sir.

*Shep.* Yet you infer from it, that all men, in the darkeſt ages and countries, could have eaſily found out a right idea of God, and human duty, by the unaſſiſted light of nature. This ſurely makes revelation, in the opinion of St. *Paul*, not only unneceſſary, but impertinent.

*Dech.* Was there ever ſo unfair a diſputant! You do not ſeem, Sir, to ſeek for the truth, but only to diſtreſs your antagoniſt, by drawing conſequences from his interpretation, without propoſing one of your own.

*Shep.* If Mr. *Cunningham* would once acknowlege the inſufficiency of his, it would then lie upon me either to own I do not underſtand the paſſage, or to furniſh a better. Pray, Mr. *Cunningham*, may I aſk you another queſtion?

*Cunn.* Provided it is a fair one.

*Shep.* Do you think St. *Paul* believed in the *Moſaic* hiſtory?

*Cunn.* An excellent queſtion! Yes.

*Shep.* Then he muſt have believed, that *Adam* was once in a ſtate of innocence, and fell from thence into a ſtate of corruption, by an act of diſobedience, which corruption he entailed on all his poſterity; that, before he

he fell, God converſed with him, revealing not only his own being, but alſo his will, in ſome reſpects, to him that God alſo revealed himſelf and his will to *Noah*; and, that both *Adam* and *Noah*, by their ſacrifices, and other acts of worſhip, as well as in the way of converſation, muſt have made known to their poſterity ſuch notices of God, and their duty, as they themſelves had received by immediate revelation.

*Cunn.* All this St. *Paul* muſt have believed.

*Shep.* But St. *Paul* could hardly have believed a tittle of it, had he been perſuaded, as you think he was, that all men could have known God, and their duty, without revelation; for, to ſay nothing of *Noah*, *Adam* in the full perfection of his nature muſt have enjoyed as much at leaſt of the natural light, as any other man, and therefore ſtood as little in need of preternatural inſtruction, as either Mr. *Dechaine* or you. But if St. *Paul* did actually believe all you have granted, an eaſy interpretation of the words you have cited from him will reſult from his faith in the *Moſaic* hiſtory, which will not be liable to the inconveniences of yours. The language of nature might have been more intelligible to man, before his faculties were impaired by ſin, than it hath been ſince. But if he had failed to find the knowlege of his Maker by this language, the voice of God himſelf, inſtructing him, muſt have been ſufficient for this purpoſe. The firſt men having, by either or both theſe means, a right idea of God from their common parents, the works of nature became a ſtanding proof or remembrancer of that idea, bearing perpetual witneſs to the truth and rectitude thereof, inſomuch that whoſoever fell therefrom into Atheiſm, or unworthy notions of the Deity, muſt have been inexcuſeable. Yet men, being now grown wicked and vain, could no longer bear the oppoſition between their own principles and practices, could no longer endure *to hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs; and therefore did not like to retain God in their knowlege; but changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beaſts, and creeping things. Thus were their fooliſh hearts darkened; upon which God gave them over to a reprobate mind,*

*mind, gave them up to uncleanneſs, to ſins of all kinds, even ſuch as were utterly againſt nature.* This is certainly the true meaning of the whole paſſage; from whence give me leave to obſerve, that there are two kinds of criminals pointed out to us therein. The firſt is of thoſe, who, having an actual knowlege of the true God, did nevertheleſs pervert and corrupt this knowlege, both in themſelves and their poſterity. Theſe, no doubt of it, were moſt horribly guilty and odious in the ſight of God, becauſe they ſinned againſt actual knowlege. The other ſort is of thoſe, who, deſcending from the original corrupters, acquieſced in the entail of blindneſs and idolatry, when they might have recovered, altho' indeed not without extreme difficulty, the right idea of God, by the force of reaſon, arguing from the works of creation, and aſſiſted by the imperfect idea of Divinity, which could never be totally extinguiſhed. Theſe were infinitely leſs culpable than the former, inaſmuch as they only ſinned in the neglect of very feeble lights, and defective means. I have already intimated, that God will judge both theſe claſſes of men, according to their reſpective opportunities.

*Cunn.* You may beſtow as high encomiums as you pleaſe on your own ſenſe of St. *Paul*'s words; you are, however, not only unſupported, but oppoſed therein, by all the divines and commentators.

*Shep.* We are to be concluded by the drift of St. *Paul* himſelf in this paſſage, rather than by the ſentiments of his commentators, who, writing before the preſent controverſy about the ſufficiency of the natural light was ſet on foot, had not occaſion to look ſo ſharply into the ſenſe of this, and ſome other places of Scripture, as hath been done ſince. St. *Chryſoſtom*, in his deſcant on the paſſage, ſays as much as you, or any Deiſt, could wiſh, upon the loudneſs and clearneſs of that language, by which the works of nature proclaim the being, power, and wiſdom of God: yet, after all, he ſays, *the Gentiles fell into a kind of madneſs; inſomuch that, having deprived themſelves of the light, and involved their minds in the darkneſs of their own thoughts, their attempt to travel towards heaven ended in a miſerable ſhipwreck, as his muſt do,*

*do, who, in a dark night, undertakes a voyage by ſea.* This is a true repreſentation of St. *Paul*'s meaning, in which the Gentiles ſtand charged with departing from the light and reaſon beſtowed on them by God, and plunging themſelves into ſuch a ſtate of ignorance and reprobation, as they were never afterwards able to extricate themſelves out of. The book of nature was ſtill as legible as ever; but they ceaſed to underſtand its language and characters. The way to true religious knowlege lay ſtill open; but they, being miſguided by conceit, and too great attachment to ſenſible things, entered upon a wrong way; ſo that ſtill the longer they travelled, the farther they wandered from the knowlege of the true God, and right religion. The doctrine of St. *Paul* concerning the blindneſs into which the Gentiles fell, is ſo confirmed by the ſtate of religion in *Africa*, *America*, and even *China*, where, to this day, no advances towards the true religion have been made, that we can no longer be at a loſs to judge either of his meaning, or of the inſufficiency of unaſſiſted reaſon to diſſipate the prejudices of the Heathen world, and open their eyes to religious truths.

*Temp.* I never in my life attended ſo cloſely to any debate; and, I muſt own, I am not without my reward. While I watched every argument on both ſides, I kept hiſtory and experience ſtill in view, and compared them with the words of the inſpired writer, with which they ſeemed at firſt to claſh; but I now clearly ſee a perfect harmony between the words of the apoſtle, on the one hand, and our knowlege of human nature, or the other; inſomuch that I cannot help obſerving, upon the whole, how much greater appearance of truth there is in the apoſtle's account of antient theology, than in that of Heathen writers. If our knowlege of God had come by obſervation or philoſophy, it muſt have ariſen, by degrees, from a diſcovery of cauſes by their effects; then the works of creation muſt have been found out to be effects; afterwards, the firſt cauſe muſt have been ſought for; and, in the end, the nature of that cauſe muſt have been traced by the nature of the effects. Thus muſt reaſon, in its inquiry after God, have proceeded;

and

and its laſt deductions muſt have been more perfect than its firſt. If the works of creation can, in our preſent blind condition, eaſily diſcover to us the Being and Attributes of God, ſurely they muſt be ſtill better qualified to ſupport that diſcovery, after it is made, and to correct any miſtakes that might have ariſen in the making of it; which is an eaſier matter by far, than to make the diſcovery itſelf. But St *Paul* gives us quite another hiſtory of the buſineſs: he ſays, that *from the creation*, ἀπὸ κτίσεως, *the inviſible things of God are clearly ſeen*; and afterwards, thro' philoſophy, and the boaſted wiſdom of man, almoſt wholly loſt, or changed into idolatry, worſe in itſelf than even total ignorance. This ſeems plainly to intimate, that our knowlege of God did not take its riſe from mere reaſon, but from revelation, or, at leaſt, from ſome extraordinary power or faculty in the nature of our firſt parents, which their poſterity are deſtitute of, and which to ſuppoſe, is, in reſpect to our preſent debate, the ſame thing as to ſuppoſe a revelation.

*Cunn.* If you go on, at this rate, to vilify reaſon, you muſt ſoon quit it intirely, and give yourſelf up to vain traditions, or old wives tales.

*Shep.* Mr. *Dechaine* ſhould have ſaid that, and not an incumbent of two pariſhes, who ought to have remembred how St. *Paul* ſpeaks of human wiſdom in reſpect to the knowlege of God and religion. In his firſt epiſtle to the *Corinthians* he ſays, *God had foretold, that he would deſtroy and confound the wiſdom of the wiſe*; and he aſks, *Hath not God made fooliſh the wiſdom of the world? For after that, in the wiſdom of God, the world by wiſdom knew not God, it pleaſed God by the fooliſhneſs of preaching to ſave them that believe.* Here the apoſtle expreſly aſſerts, that the world did not, by its own wiſdom, philoſophizing on the wiſdom of God, diſplayed in the works of creation, find out God; and that God was therefore pleaſed, by the preaching of the goſpel, which to the conceited *Greeks* appeared *fooliſhneſs*, to ſupply the vaſt defects of human wiſdom, that faith might effect that, which philoſophy had failed of. The ſame apoſtle, in the eleventh chapter of his epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, diſtinguiſhes faith from knowlege, and defines it, *the ſubſtance*

of

*of things hoped for, the evidence of things not ſeen*; and then adds, *Thro' faith we underſtand, that the worlds were framed by the Word of God.* So that, according to him, the very firſt and fundamental principle, on which the philoſopher can build his inveſtigation of religion, muſt be communicated to him by faith, not his own reſearches. And, indeed, nothing but revelation and faith can, with any certainty, teach us, that *the things which are ſeen*, namely, matter, and all its various modifications, were made out of things that do not appear, that is, out of nothing, and by a pure Spirit. Philoſophy could hardly have beat out ſo inconceivable a myſtery, but muſt have either concluded matter to have been eternal, or muſt have ſuppoſed its efficient cauſe to have been material. This we ſee verified by experience: the Heathens, as *Porphyry* himſelf acknowleges, never aſcribed the creation of the world to God; but maintained, that either the univerſe is God, or that its matter was coeval with God. *If we look back*, ſays the learned *Shuckford, and make a fair inquiry, we ſhall find, that the antient wiſe men did not fall into their errors by paying too great a deference to tradition, and pretended revelations, but by ſetting up what they thought a reaſonable ſcheme of religion, in oppoſition to the traditional; and that the frame and courſe of nature was not ſufficiently underſtood, to make men maſters of true philoſophy.* The ſame author further obſerves, that *there is nothing ſo extravagant or ridiculous, which men of the greateſt parts, and eminency for the natural ſtrength of their underſtandings, have not defended; as is evident, by what* Plato *and* Plutarch *have ſaid in vindication of the* Egyptian *ſuperſtitions.* As for the latter, he ſays, in his book concerning *Iſis* and *Oſiris*, that *there is nothing in the Heathen mythology unreaſonable, idle, or ſuperſtitious; and that a good moral, hiſtorical, or philoſophical reaſon, may be given for every part of every fable therein.*

*Temp.* I imagined ſuch perſons as *Plato, Plutarch, Cicero*, &c. had, in reality, deſpiſed the theology of their reſpective countries.

*Shep. Socrates* and *Plato* ſaw an infinite deal of abſurdity, and even wickedneſs, in the Pagan worſhip: yet, having

having no thorough aſſurances of a better, and ſeeing plainly the neceſſity of religion, they laboured to correct that of their own country; but, as for *Cicero* and *Plutarch*, they had both of them a warm zeal for the ſuperſtitions they were educated in, eſpecially the latter, who, it muſt be confeſſed, was one of the wiſeſt and greateſt men that ever enriched the commonwealth of letters. If ſuch men as theſe were capable of thinking ſo like the vulgar and illiterate, how could the more ignorant, that is, almoſt the whole race of mankind, have beat out from their own obſervations a right notion of God, and their duty to him? When I conſider either the narrow bounds of human reaſon in articles of knowlege more attainable, or the full experiment made of its weakneſs in former ages, and in men of the greateſt abilities, and the higheſt improvements: I cannot but conclude it almoſt incapable of arriving at a right or ſufficient knowlege of God by its own unaſſiſted efforts.

*Cunn.* Be that as it will, in the tenth chapter of the *Acts*, *Peter* ſays, *I perceive God is no reſpecter of perſons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteouſneſs, is accepted with him.* This, ſurely, is as much as to ſay, that in every nation ſome may know and fear God, and live good lives.

*Shep.* And altho' ſome ſhould, what is that to the bulk of mankind? He that worketh righteouſneſs, muſt, in order to it, fear God; and he that feareth God, muſt firſt know him, namely, the true God, before he can render himſelf agreeable to him. But no ſhadow of an argument can be drawn from this reflection of St. *Peter*, that all mankind may, without inſtruction, eaſily know him; nor from the particular caſe of *Cornelius*, which gave occaſion to that reflection: for this good man, having ſpent ſome time among the *Jews*, was already a convert to the worſhip of the only true God, and, in conſequence of this, was very devout, and gave much to the poor; yet, not ſatisfied with this, he ſent for St. *Peter*, by the command of an Angel, with an earneſt deſire to become a Chriſtian. Such a perſon, and in ſuch a diſpoſition, altho' no *Jew*, could not fail to be acceptable in the ſight of God: but this is nothing at all to the

the preſent purpoſe, becauſe it was his living among the *Jews* that made him a worſhiper of the true God; and it was the viſion of an Angel that inclined him to Chriſtianity. Had he been centurion of a band in *Spain* or *Britain* at that time, and not favoured with a particular meſſage from God, I am apt to think he could hardly have made ſuch advances towards the truth. There is no one ſo blind, but may perceive, by the whole paſſage, that St. *Peter* himſelf was converted, on this occaſion, from the narrow and rigid partiality of a *Jew*, who thought the benefits of the Chriſtian religion were to be confined to his own nation; and made to underſtand the extent of the new diſpenſation, which is laid open to the *Gentiles*, as well as the *Jews*, if they will, like *Cornelius*, ſhew the neceſſary diſpoſitions to embrace it. Although nothing can be more obvious than this, yet *Tindal* hath the aſſurance to place the reflection before-mentioned at the front of his book; where, being ſeparated from the context, it ſeems to ſpeak againſt the neceſſity of revelation, and to refute the Sacred Writings, from whence it is borrowed. Had you not taken it upon his authority, and neglected to read over the paſſage where it lies, you could never have brought it thus, in defence of his opinion, againſt the religion you profeſs.

*Cunn.* I do not think it any way prejudicial to the Chriſtian religion, to ſhew from Scripture, either that the religion and law of nature are good in themſelves, or diſcoverable by the light of natural reaſon.

*Shep.* What do you think, Mr. *Dechaine?*

*Dech.* No matter whether it is, or not; even Scripture may be quoted, if, on any occaſion, it ſerves the cauſe of truth. Does not St. *Paul* acknowlege to the *Athenians*, that certain of the *Greek* poets had held the omnipreſence of God; and *that in him we live, and move, and have our being?*

*Shep.* What then? It does not follow, that all the *Greeks*, much leſs all the barbarous nations, either had, or could have, a right notion of God; nor even that thoſe poets thought properly of him in any other reſpect. If St. *Paul* had been ſenſible they did, he would not have failed to quote them for other points of theology, as well

well as this, becauſe nothing could have better ſerved his purpoſe; as we may perceive, not only by this quotation, but by his taking the *exordium* of this very diſcourſe from the inſcription on an altar at *Athens*, *To the unknown God.* It is eaſy to perceive, he was glad to catch at the ſmalleſt glimmerings of truth preſerved among the *Greeks*, in order to recommend the worſhip of the only true God, as a thing not altogether new to all their countrymen.

*Dech.* He ſays, in his ſhort diſcourſe at *Lyſtra*, that *God left not himſelf without witneſſes among the darkeſt nations, in that he did good, and gave them rain from heaven, and fruitful ſeaſons; filling their hearts with food and gladneſs.*

*Shep.* It is true, God gave all men, and the *Lyſtrians* among the reſt, full evidence of his being and goodneſs; that is, ſufficient evidence, in the works of creation and Providence, to prove both, in caſe a proof ſhould, at any time, become neceſſary. Obſerve, however, Sir, that the ſtarting a propoſition is one thing, and the proof of it quite another. But the *Lyſtrians* were as blind to this evidence as other Heathens, and attributed the goodneſs of God to falſe deities; in conſequence of which, taking *Barnabas* and *Paul* for *Jupiter* and *Mercury*, whom they thanked for the common bleſſings of life, they were going to offer ſacrifices to them for the miraculous cure of the cripple. We ſee evidently, by their behaviour, there was a neceſſity for turning their eyes towards the works of creation, and the effects of God's goodneſs, in order to guide them to the knowlege of the true cauſe. Every ſcience hath its proofs in the nature of things: yet all ſciences require to be taught; and thoſe require it moſt, the firſt principles of which lie a little out of the reach of ordinary capacities. The firſt principles of religion, being of an high and ſpiritual nature, are harder to be found out, than thoſe of any other ſcience; becauſe the minds of men are groſs and earthy, uſed to objects of ſenſe; and all their depraved appetites, and corrupt diſpoſitions, which are by nature oppoſite to the true religion, help to increaſe the natural weakneſs of their reaſon, and clip the wings of their contemplations, when

they endeavour, by their own ſtrength, to ſoar towards God, and heavenly things. No man, in his, nor hardly in any other time, knew better how to catch at the evidence of Divine truths, diſcovered in the works of creation, nor had better opportunities, than *Plato:* yet, with all the helps he derived from foreign and domeſtic inſtruction, he finds himſelf, on every occaſion, at a loſs, when he ſpeaks of God, and Divine matters; relies on oracles, traditions, and revelations; and, having got a little taſte of this kind of inſtruction, is every now-and-then confeſſing his want of more, and wiſhing for it with the greateſt anxiety.

*Temp.* Mr. *Shepherd*, do you not take revelation to be neceſſary?

*Shep.* I do.

*Temp.* I would be glad to hear wherein you make that neceſſity to conſiſt: for altho' you repreſent the blindneſs of human nature as extremely great, in reſpect to the inveſtigation of true religion, which, indeed, I think it is; yet you expreſs yourſelf, on ſome occaſions, as if you thought mankind capable of finding out a right idea of God, and their duty. From hence ariſes no ſmall confuſion in my mind, which, otherwiſe, reflecting on the horrible errors into which all uninſtructed nations plunged themſelves, in relation to the nature and will of the Deity, and conſidering the narrowneſs of the human underſtanding, immerſed in matter, and forming, of itſelf, no other but ſenſible ideas, is now inclined to think we could never have found out the true religion, had not ſome ſuperior Being inſtructed us therein.

*Dech.* Well ſaid, *Templeton!* O the ſwallow of thy credulity! The leſſons of the nurſery are uppermoſt again, and the faith of *Templeton* the ſcholar outruns the arguments of *Shepherd* the maſter.

*Shep.* Surely that can never happen, as long as the reaſonings of Mr. *Dechaine* are ſo convincing, and his wit ſo very keen. Pray, Mr. *Templeton*, do you think God is abſolutely bound, by his juſtice, to give us a true religion, and every other good thing we may ſtand in need of?

*Temp.* I rather think this, and all other his gifts, proceed from his infinite goodneſs.

*Shep.* Is his goodneſs voluntary, or determined by neceſſity?

*Temp.* Without queſtion, it is voluntary; and therefore merits our deepeſt acknowlegements.

*Shep.* From the attributes of God, then, it cannot be proved, that every man muſt neceſſarily have the true religion given to him; and, accordingly, we find, ſome have not been bleſſed with ſufficient means of attaining to it; which could never have happened, had God been obliged by juſtice, or any neceſſity of fate, or his own nature, to beſtow thoſe means on all men.

*Temp.* Yet men cannot be happy without the true religion.

*Shep.* Right; and it is from hence, and the extreme difficulty, not impoſſibility, of finding out that religion by the unaſſiſted light of nature, that the neceſſity of a revelation ariſes. Beſides, altho' a few perſons of ſuperior talents and application ſhould diſcover the true religion, this could be of little uſe, becauſe merely by their own efforts, and without the aſſiſtance of miracles and grace, they could never ſo propagate their diſcovery, as to convert the world thereunto, and univerſally convince mankind of its truth. If all men therefore, ſtand in abſolute need of the true religion, in order to arrive at true and perfect happineſs; and if few or none can attain to that religion by the mere light of nature, in its preſent dark and degenerate circumſtances, and in the midſt of violent appetites, of rooted prejudices, and of ſenſible objects and ideas only; it will follow, that nothing but revelation can make us perfectly happy. I will further explain myſelf, by a parallel inſtance. If you can earn bread for yourſelf and family by no other means, but ſurveying of land, or taking the command of a ſhip; muſt you not, in order to a thorough ſkill in either of thoſe employments, underſtand geometry?

*Temp.* I muſt.

*Shep.* Can you invent a ſyſtem of geometry, without the aſſiſtance of any book or maſter?

*Temp.* I cannot.

*Shep.*

*Shep.* Altho' you poſſibly might, it would, at leaſt, require the greater part, if not the whole of your life, to perfect ſuch a diſcovery; but, in the mean time, your neceſſary ſubſiſtence would not allow you ſo much time for ſpeculation; or, if it ſhould, there is a million to one, the tedioufneſs and trouble, attending ſuch a courſe of ſtudy, would deter you from the attempt.

*Temp.* I ſhould never once think of ſetting about it.

*Shep.* If, therefore, you muſt be a geometrician, the branch of knowlege you ſtand ſo much in need of, muſt be revealed to you by the books of *Euclid*, or ſome living inſtructor.

*Temp.* I now plainly perceive wherein you place the neceſſity of revelation.

*Shep.* In this ſubordinate ſenſe, revelation is neceſſary, in order to a competent knowlege of natural religion; that is, in order to our arriving at a right idea of God and his attributes, of the relation we ſtand in to him as the Creator and Governor of the world, and of adequate ſanctions to enforce his law. The wiſeſt of the Heathen ſages judged, in this, exactly as I do; and made our knowlege of God to depend, not on philoſophical inquiries, but on tradition. *Plato* is full of reflections to this purpoſe; and, not thinking the traditions, which he was acquainted with, ſufficient, he talks of a future inſtructor to be ſent from God, to teach the world a more perfect knowlege of religious duties. *The truth is*, ſays he, ſpeaking, in his firſt book *De Legibus*, concerning future rewards and puniſhments, *to determine or eſtabliſh any thing certain about theſe matters, in the midſt of ſo many doubts and diſputations, is the work of God only.* In his *Phædon*, one of the ſpeakers ſays to *Socrates*, concerning the immortality of the ſoul, *I am of the ſame opinion with you, that, in this life, it is either abſolutely impoſſible, or extremely difficult, to arrive at a clear knowlege in this matter.* In the apology he wrote for *Socrates*, he puts theſe words into his mouth, on the ſubject of reformation of manners: *You may paſs the remainder of your days in ſleep, or a deſpair of finding out a ſufficient expedient for this purpoſe, if God, in his providence, doth not ſend you ſome other inſtructor.* And in his *Epinomis* he

ſays, *Let no one take upon him to teach, if God do not lead the way.* In the book *De Mundo*, aſcribed to *Ariſtotle*, we have a remarkable paſſage to this effect: *It is an old tradition, almoſt univerſally received, that all things proceeded from God, and ſubſiſt thro' him; and that no nature is ſelf-ſufficient, or independent of God's protection and aſſiſtance.* In his metaphyſics he aſcribes the belief of the gods, and of this, that the Deity encompaſſes and comprehends all nature, to a traditionary habit of ſpeaking, handed down from the firſt men to after-ages. *Cicero*, in his treatiſe concerning the nature of the gods, introduces *Cotta* blaming thoſe who endeavoured, by argumentation, to prove there are gods, and affirming that this only ſerved to make the point doubtful, which, by the inſtructions and traditions of their forefathers, had been ſufficiently made known to them, and eſtabliſhed. *Plutarch*, ſpeaking of the worſhip paid to a certain ideal divinity, which his friend had called in queſtion, ſays, *It is enough to believe purſuant to the faith of our anceſtors, and the inſtructions communicated to us in the country where we were born and bred; than which we can neither find out, nor apply, any argument more to be depended on (a).* So much for the neceſſity of revelation, in reſpect to natural religion. There are, however, other articles of religion, as neceſſary to be known as the natural; which we cannot poſſibly have the leaſt notion of, without revelation: ſuch as the doctrine of the Trinity, of the incarnation, of the ſatisfaction, of grace, and of the reſurrection. To the knowlege of theſe, revelation is abſolutely neceſſary. Man, in the utmoſt perfection of his nature, is utterly incapable of conceiving ſuch myſteries, without the aſſiſtance of a Divine inſtructor; nor, after they are revealed, can they be effectually, if at all, propagated, without the aid of miracles.

*Dech.* We have other matters, Parſon, to talk about, before we come to your miracles and myſteries.

*Temp.* But pray, Mr. *Shepherd*, is the knowlege of theſe latter articles neceſſary to ſalvation?

*Shep.* No man can be ſaved, who, having an opportunity of knowing them, neglects it; or who, being once inſtructed

(a) Plut. de Amat.

inſtructed in them, remains, or turns an unbeliever. As to thoſe who never had any ſuch opportunity, we are no-way concerned to inquire what God intends to do with them; and, accordingly, God hath given us, in holy Scripture, little or no grounds whereon to build even an opinion, in a matter ſo unfathomable, and ſo wholly foreign to all the valuable purpoſes of uſeful knowlege. I have already obſerved to you, that, on the principles of Deiſm, they muſt be all infinitely guilty, in the ſight of God, for wilfully acting in the groſſeſt manner againſt the clear light, theological, as well as moral, which God, ſay the Deiſts, hath beſtowed, by nature, abundantly on every man. There is no ſuch heavy ſentence paſſed on them by revelation; for if, on the one hand, the means of entering into the Chriſtian covenant are denied them, and many expreſſions wholly exclude them from the ſcriptural terms of ſalvation, it is certain, that, on the other, there is reaſon given us, in Scripture, to hope that the merits of Chriſt's death may, in ſome meaſure, be extended to them, provided they make the beſt uſe they can of their reaſon, and endeavour to live unblameable lives. For we are told, that Chriſt died for the ſins of the whole world; and God is ſaid to be the Saviour of all men, eſpecially of thoſe that believe. This may be rationally concluded, alſo, from what our Saviour ſays, in the fifteenth chapter of the Goſpel according to St. *John*; where, ſpeaking of thoſe who rejected him after his having appeared to them, preached to them, and wrought miracles for their conviction, he ſays, *If I had not come and ſpoken to them, they had not had ſin; but now they have no cloak for their ſin. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had ſin; but now they have both ſeen and hated both me and my Father.* From hence it is natural to infer, that ſin, at leaſt the ſin of reſiſting the light of his Goſpel, will not be imputed to ſuch perſons as that light was never communicated to; ſuch perſons as Chriſt never manifeſted himſelf, his religion, or his miracles to. To much the ſame effect St. *Paul* ſays, *Where no law is, there is no tranſgreſſion.* From whence we muſt conclude, that the Heathen are only ſo far to be condemned for the breach of God's

law, as they have means of knowing it; and that a revelation, made to others, puts them, to whom it was never made, in no worſe condition than they were before. It is, however, a point that will admit of no queſtion, That if the true religion is neceſſary to refine human nature, to reſtore it to its original dignity, and promote its real happineſs, Chriſtians muſt be in an infinitely better condition than Pagans. For altho' Chriſtianity ſhould, in many reſpects, be a falſe religion: yet its bittereſt enemies muſt confeſs, that it comes incomparably nearer to truth and nature, than Paganiſm; that its morality is purer, its ſanctions ſtronger, and the ideas it conveys of God and his attributes, juſter; and that where-ever, throughout the whole world, its preternatural doctrines are not known or admitted, others, of a nature moſt repugnant to reaſon, and moſt deſtructive of virtue and happineſs, are eſtabliſhed. Other men may think as they will; but, for my own part, I am clear in this, that natural religion hath a neceſſary dependence on revelation, and on that part of Chriſtianity which may be called ſupernatural: for religion, in any ſenſe, is but a name, without a well-grounded hope of immortality, which no man ever had, or, for aught we can tell, ever could have had, if ſome ſuperior Being had not revealed it to him. That man who does not believe in his own immortality, can never conceive himſelf to be any thing elſe, than a better kind of brute, concerned only in preſent and ſenſible things, given up to appetite and paſſion, and, after a few years exiſtence in vanity and vexation, periſhing for ever in the dreadful gulf of annihilation. Yet, to believe in the immortality of the ſoul, and to be convinced we ſhall account hereafter for our actions to Almighty God by any law, is to all men, for all have ſinned, a moſt ſhocking article of faith, if an atonement for ſin is not alſo believed in; becauſe it affords us no other proſpect, but that of a judgment, wherein as we muſt plead guilty, and ſtand ſelf-convicted, ſo there is nothing to prevent our being condemned by Almighty God to a puniſhment, of which we know not the limits, either in point of ſeverity or duration. Now, Mr. *Templeton*, the doctrine of an atonement carries us directly to that

that of Chriſt's incarnation, and a perſonal diſtinction in God. This I hope to prove ſo clearly hereafter, as to convince you, that the mere light of nature, in our preſent circumſtances, can afford us either no religion, or ſuch an one as can ſerve no other purpoſe, but that of driving a rational and thinking mind to deſpair.

*Temp.* I foreſee this part of our controverſy will open an extraordinary ſcene, which I long to be in the midſt of.

*Dech.* You have, indeed, a prodigious taſte for the marvellous in religion; and therefore, the more it is decorated with the ſcenary and machinery of Divine interpoſitions, the more apt I am convinced it will be to take your imagination. For this reaſon, the poet would be your beſt apoſtle, or prophet; and the word *vates* might ſerve you, as it did the old *Romans*, to repreſent him in both capacities.

*Shep.* By the words, *divine revelation*, ſtrictly taken, we underſtand only ſuch religious informations as we could not poſſibly, or, at leaſt, not without the greateſt difficulty, come to the knowlege of by the mere force of our own natural faculties; or, in the loweſt ſenſe, we mean, by them, the diſcovery of ſuch religious truths as mankind in general were actually ignorant of before that diſcovery was made, whether we ſuppoſe the cauſe of their ignorance to have been neglect, or incapacity. Concerning the incapacity of mankind to find out true religion, we have ſaid enough, already, for our preſent purpoſe; but, as to the neglect of thoſe means which nature alone hath afforded them, in order to this important end, if ſuch there are, it hath been ſo great and univerſal, as to make inſtruction not a whit leſs neceſſary, than it would have been, had human nature the benefit of no ſuch means. This muſt, I think, be acknowleged by thoſe who look on Deiſm to be the true religion, if they conſider how few Deiſts there are in the world, and how long it was before Deiſm made its appearance. If we are, therefore, ſo apt to ſhut our eyes to the light of nature, we certainly ſtand in need of ſomewhat foreign to nature, or above it, to teach us what we will not receive from nature. If ſuch poſitive inſtitutions, as

the ſabbath, the ſacraments, and a miniſtry to inſtruct us, may be highly conducive to this end, the neceſſity of Divine interpoſition, without which the aforeſaid means cannot be effectually inſtituted, muſt be granted. It was the noble ſentiment of *Plato*, that *every dependent nature muſt be governed by a ſuperior nature*; and, from a thorough knowlege of mankind, he concluded, that *they muſt be governed by the Divine Being*. If, therefore, man is enſlaved to wickedneſs by the corruption of his nature, it is not enough that he knows the law of God, which, of himſelf, he is unable to obſerve; he muſt, in order to a due obſervance of that law, have ſome aſſiſtance from God, ſufficient to counterbalance the prevalence of his natural corruption, and make him free. As the blindneſs of human underſtanding requires Divine inſtruction, ſo the perverſity of human will ſtands in abſolute need of Divine grace, to bend it back again from its inclination to vice, and ſet it upright. To deny this latter, is to deny that the paſſions and appetites have a powerful influence on the will, or that they themſelves are corrupt and violent; both of which are, I think, too evident, to be diſputed; for all the ſins of thoſe who believe in God, and know his law, are a full proof of both, ſince they ſhew, that a bare knowlege of God, and his will, are not enough to keep us in our duty; which they fail to do in us all, in proportion as the grace of God is wanted, or reſiſted. Thus, gentlemen, the aſſiſtance, required to make us good and happy, is not only ſcientifical, but practical.

*Dech.* And ſo all the good we do, and for which we hope to be rewarded with the joys of heaven, muſt be done, not by ourſelves, but by God. This, I think, is childiſh.

*Temp.* I believe you do not underſtand Mr. *Shepherd*. He only ſays, the aſſiſtance of God is neceſſary to counterbalance the corrupt biaſs in our nature to wickedneſs, in order to make us free agents; after which, the good we do, is, in ſome meaſure, our own, being the effect of a free choice, and therefore may be rewarded.

*Shep.* You do me juſtice. To ſum and illuſtrate what hath paſſed on this latter topic; The book of nature contains

contains the ſcience of Divine things; but without inſtruction we cannot, in the blindneſs of our preſent condition, rightly underſtand its language and characters; after we are taught to underſtand them, we cannot, without powerful inducements, be prevailed on to peruſe and ſtudy the contents of that book; and, after we have peruſed it, we are unable to apply the knowlege, we gather from it, to practice, till the impediments, ariſing from the corruption of our nature, are removed, or balanced, by Divine aſſiſtance.

*Dech.* And when the utmoſt lights, reaſon can give us from the book of nature, are attained to, ſtill a ſecond volume is wanting, to teach us myſterious and preternatural religion. It is now near three, ſo that there is hardly ſufficient time left to dreſs ourſelves.

*The End of the Third* DIALOGUE.

# DIALOGUE IV.

DECHAINE, TEMPLETON, | CUNNINGHAM, SHEPHERD.

*Temp.* SINCE we finiſhed our yeſterday's conference, I have been trying to recollect what paſſed, and to extract from it a ſettled ſyſtem of thinking on religious ſubjects, that may ſerve me during my whole life. But whether it is that my memory fails me, or that my former high opinion of the natural light ſtill retains a corner of my aſſent, and from thence batters whatever I attempt to build, I am ſtill conſiderably embarraſſed.

*Shep.* This is natural. It ſhews a ſenſible and ingenous mind to preſerve a mean between too lightly divorcing a former ſyſtem, and too obſtinately declining the eſpouſal of a new one. But, while two oppoſite principles, at the head of their reſpective arguments, contend for preference, while the mind, in reſpect to the decline of former opinions, and the growth of new ones, is as it were molting, there is a ſtruggle, a diſorder, felt in an honeſt and rational breaſt, which others are ſtrangers to, who either, thro' a too eaſy wantonneſs of mind, know not how to be chaſte to any principle, or, thro' a ſtupid immobility, remain for ever riveted to their firſt attachments, altho' contracted without examination, and, conſequently, without ſufficient reaſon or grounds. Your preſent uneaſineſs, however, will vaniſh as ſoon as it ought, I mean, as ſoon as the arguments on one ſide ſo far preponderate, as to make this yet neceſſary warineſs no longer uſeful. What Mr. *Dechaine* ſaid the other day, will haſten the re-ſettlement of your thoughts.

*Dech.* What, a compliment from Mr. *Shepherd!*

*Shep.* A little patience, Sir. You ſaid ſomething to this effect; that, as the ends of religion are of more

importance to us than the use of our outward senses, the ideas it gives us of God and our duty, ought, if possible, to be more clear and determinate to our reason, than the distinction between colours to our eye. And, indeed, I must confess, if nature were the only canal through which God intended to convey the absolutely necessary knowlege of himself, and all human duties, its voice would have been made a little louder, and more intelligible, to all men, and all capacities, than we find it is: it must, perhaps, as you have frequently insisted, be so plain, that there could be no controversy about it. Hunger, thirst, love, fear, and other natural motions, are universally strong and evident in all men. Were religious and moral obligations notified to us by our Maker, only thro' the light of nature, they too would by nature, one should think, be universally evident and incontestable. Yet we find the wisest unassisted men, in all ages, have differed widely about them; and those who trusted most to their own abilities, who rejected traditionary knowlege, and drew all from within themselves, have given us the most absurd schemes of religion and morality. If a man were disposed to shut his eyes against all other lights but the natural, and put himself on the mere dictates of philosophy, shall he trust only to his own sentiments and reason? If he does, let him first give back all he hath got by instruction and conversation, by reading, by business, by the laws of his country, *&c.* and then let us see what his unassisted nature will be able to produce. If he finds it defective, we will allow him all the antient and modern philosophers, who drew the first principles and hints of all they have delivered to the world from instruction, and let him try if he can extract a right system of obligation and duty from their lucubrations. Will he join himself to the *Stoics?* No; nature refutes their doctrine of apathy, and places a wide difference between pleasure and pain: its infirmities make their pretensions to infallibility and perfection ridiculous. Shall he herd with the *Epicureans?* If he does, as religion will be wholly out of the question, and pleasure the only good, he must quit society, which can have no other foundation but religion, and make one

among goats or ſwine, as *Horace* ſtiles himſelf, while an *Epicurean*. But as it is extremely ſlaviſh and diſagreeable to be wedded to any ſet of principles, the *Pyrrhonian* philoſophy will relieve him from their ridiculous notions, and alſo from the endleſs refinements of the *Athenian*, *Cyrenaic*, and other ſchools. But what ſort of a father, huſband, neighbour, or commonwealth's-man is he to be, who hath no opinions, no principles? Is he, as to matters of religion, to take up with the theology of *Egypt*, *Greece*, *Rome*, or any other country that contrived a religion, and made gods for itſelf? No; this will ſet him on his knees to a parricide, an adultreſs, a drunkard, a dog, an onion, a wooden, a rotten god, or a devil. Can *Socrates* or *Plato* relieve him, and dictate a right religion to him? No; they confeſs the neceſſity of revelation. If ſuch men as theſe are unable to inſtruct him ſufficiently in his duty, and bind it on his conſcience with motives and authorities ſo cogent and awful, as to keep the corrupt tendencies and wild ſallies of his nature within due bounds, much leſs will *Seneca*, *Marcus Aurelius*, *Plutarch*, *Hierocles*, &c. be able to do it; for they only build on the older philoſophers, already found inſufficient: and, beſides, if in any thing they come nearer to reaſon, it is as evidently owing to the Chriſtian religion, as the reformation of Paganiſm made by *Julian*. If he hopes for information from either the religion or philoſophy of the antient Pagan world, he will find himſelf as much diſappointed and out of humour with both, as *Lucian* was; and if he be of a ludicrous turn, as ready to make a jeſt of both. If he applies himſelf to our *Engliſh* philoſophers, he will find the greater part of them declaring and arguing ſtrenuouſly for revelation at one time, and, at another, advancing, and endeavouring to maintain, particular ſchemes of their own, conſiſtent neither with revelation, nor one another. As to the reſt, who declare for Deiſm, he will perceive they borrow all their materials from the former; adopt their inconſiſtencies; ſpeak for and againſt revelation, and future rewards and puniſhments; for and againſt innate ideas of God, and moral duty; for and againſt the being of immaterial ſubſtances; make the knowlege and obli-

gation of moral duties to ariſe, ſome from an internal ſenſe, with *Cumberland* and *Hutcheſon*; others, from reaſon, and the fitneſſes of things, with *Clarke* and *Balguy*; others, from the laws of ſociety, as *Hobbes* and his followers, who have not even a pretender to Chriſtianity for a precedent. He will find them dealing artfully and doubly in every thing; and, what renders them moſt unfit for his purpoſes, referring him intirely to himſelf, and bantering him with repeated aſſurances, that he already knows all thoſe matters perfectly well, about which he is ſeeking with ſo much ſolicitude for ſatisfaction.

*Dech.* This referring of a man to himſelf, you may dreſs out as ridiculouſly as you pleaſe; and you may teach people to look for the knowlege of themſelves without them; but, ſurely, if any man would know himſelf, he ought to look within, and converſe with himſelf. It is by that method only that he can perceive his own ſtrength or weakneſs. He can never know what is amiſs with him, till he examines himſelf. His ſentiments and reaſon ſpeak a plain and expreſſive language; but if, inſtead of liſtening to them, he will ramble about from one quack, or undertaker of minds, to another; if he muſt needs look for himſelf in others, and for the knowlege of his duty in books; it is little wonder, and as little matter, if he ſpend his days in ignorance. The diſorders of our minds proceed from without; and it is in vain to look for our cure from that quarter, from whence the malady is received. If my Lord *Shafteſbury*'s advice concerning ſoliloquy and ſelf-converſe were followed, we ſhould want no other inſtructors but ourſelves. Do we not acquire the knowlege of all other things, by conſidering and examining thoſe things themſelves? And do we hope to know what is within us, if we do not conſider and examine ourſelves? Our duty may be wrote in ſtrong and capital characters upon our own hearts; but if we never read nor peruſe ourſelves, it will be hard to convince us we have any ſuch proviſion made for information within; and if we neglect this, as there is no other ſource of religious or moral knowlege to draw from, we muſt be for ever in the dark as to our duty, our diſorders, and their cure.

But,

But, no doubt on't, they, who make a livelihood by preſcribing to the ſouls of men, are in the right on't to render people as diſtruſtful of themſelves as they can, to call them out, from the faithful monitor within, to a ſlaviſh dependence on their venal inſtructions, and to put out their eyes, that they may be paid for leading them about, the Lord knows whither.

*Shep.* But we Parſons recommend nothing more earneſtly to our hearers than meditation and ſelf-examination, which are as good as *Shafteſbury*'s ſoliloquy and ſelf-converſe.

*Dech.* Yes; but you pretend to know us better, than we ourſelves. You will needs guide us thro' our own minds, and are at every turn for finding out diſorders, which you alone can cure.

*Shep.* Some diſorders of the mind may be cured, like ſome diſtempers of the body, by medicine of its own. But there are others, that require a phyſician. Beſides, it often happens, that as we ſtand in need of advice to direct us how to cure our own bodily ailments, ſo in like manner we frequently want the ſkill of ſome one more knowing than ourſelves, to point to us the very natural cures for our mental complaints, that are placed within ourſelves, and to teach us how to apply them. The philoſophy of *Shafteſbury*, which he modeſtly calls *a revelation made by him to mankind*, conſiſts in ſeeking out reſources within ourſelves, which nevertheleſs he takes upon him to inſtruct us in the manner of doing. He inlarges very ſenſibly and agreeably upon the topic of ſelf-converſe, in his advice to an author; altho' it muſt be owned, in the moſt affected terms and phraſes. It is true indeed, that a man, in order to be good and happy, ought, by all means, to know himſelf; and that ſoliloquy and meditation are abſolutely neceſſary to this important ſcience. But if a man ſhould truſt wholly to his own contemplations on himſelf, ignorance and vanity would infallibly be the reſult. Without converſing with the world, and putting ourſelves to frequent trials by affairs and intercourſe with mankind, we can never furniſh ourſelves with materials for ſecret meditation. Without having tried our ſtrength, our weakneſs, our incli-

inclinations and averſions, we ſhall want experiments to reaſon from. A work of this ſort can by no means be effected merely in ſolitude, and at a diſtance from the world. He who mixes with the world, hath frequent opportunities of trying his own ſtrength, and ſeeing in what particularly it conſiſts, and how far he may depend on it. Nor hath he fewer occaſions of ſeeing his own infirmities. This accident puts him in mind, that he is timorous; that adventure diſcovers to him, that he is envious. This acquaintance lets him know, that he is proud and choleric; that tells him, he is raſh and injudicious. Having collected a ſufficient ſtock of ſuch obſervations, it will be then a proper time for him to meet himſelf in his cloſet, or the lonely walk, and caſt up the full accounts of himſelf; which if he does with impartiality and penetration, he will find in the reſult, that he is a weak and irregular creature, and cannot depend on himſelf; that his underſtanding is dark and ſhort-ſighted, and his paſſions wild and ungovernable. What then muſt he do?

*Dech.* He muſt arm himſelf the beſt he can againſt ſuch lapſes as he may have made on former occaſions.

*Shep.* But he finds, to his great mortification, that he is unable to form reſolutions of ſufficient firmneſs to withſtand the trials he is to expect, and to ſubdue the ſtubbornneſs of his own degenerate nature; and that, little as he can do to prevent the repetitions of his former weakneſſes, he can do ſtill leſs to defend himſelf againſt the attacks of ſurprize, and unforeſeen trials. What reſource hath he then in himſelf, or what ſupplies of ſtrength can he draw from his own breaſt, the ſource of all his infirmities? Why, none at all. They are the irregularities of that very breaſt he wants to reduce and correct, and can hope for no ſuccours from thence. Which way then is he to turn himſelf? What ally is he to call in? There is one at hand, and preſent with him, who neither wants compaſſion, nor power, to aſſiſt him; and that is God. If he be as ſenſible, as his experience ought to have made him, of his own inſufficiency, and humbly applies himſelf to this never-failing friend of the lowly and ſincere in diſtreſs, he ſhall quickly find relief.

It

It is true, this powerful aſſiſtant will not appear viſibly to him, nor converſe with him, as one man does with another; having done that already in his word, where the remedies of all his diſorders, and the bridle neceſſary for all his headſtrong irregularities, are ſet forth to him in the ſtrongeſt terms; nay, where his own infirmities and corruptions are more truly repreſented to him by that wiſdom, which made and knows him, than it is poſſible for the moſt ſevere ſcrutiny he can make into himſelf, to do it. There he ſees, that his corruptions are original and natural; that his heart is deſperately wicked; and that he hath the world, the devil, and his own fleſhly luſts, to contend with. There he ſees the omnipreſence and perpetual inſpection of Almighty God into the deepeſt receſſes, and moſt ſecret thoughts, of his heart. There he finds the gracious aſſiſtance of God in all emergencies, above the ſtrength of nature, by the words of eternal truth faithfully promiſed to him. Let him then quit his converſation with his deceitful ſelf, and enter into cloſe conference with God, who will not lye to him, like his own vain and fallacious heart. Do not ſuch and ſuch of my diſpoſitions, he may ſay, lead me to actions pleaſing in the ſight of God? And will he not crown thoſe actions, if I perform them, with infinite happineſs, and true glory? Do not certain other propenſities in my degenerate nature prompt me to actions extremely offenſive to him? And are not the puniſhments he threatens to ſuch, in his word, if I commit them, inconceivably ſevere? Is he preſent every-where? And will he be with me when I mount the ſtage of action, as well as here in my cloſet or walk? What have I then to do, but to imprint on my mind a deep and perpetual apprehenſion of his preſence and inſpection? So ſhall he become to me a continual monitor, or guide, in all I think, ſpeak, or do. My infirmities ſupplied by his ſtrength; and my paſſions awed by his majeſtic preſence; I may hope to hold on ſteadily towards the great purpoſes and good ends of my being. Here, Sir, is a way of eſtabliſhing, between the ſoul and God, a moſt uſeful and happy intercourſe; which no lights from within a man's ſelf are able to introduce him to, nor all the philoſophy,

loſophy of the world can point out to him. I will ſuppoſe the mere pleaſure of doing good, and abhorrence of evil, to be natural, and as ſtrong in all men as you pleaſe; but would not our motives to good actions, and detriments to evil ones, be much ſtronger, if we believed, that a Being of infinite wiſdom knew all we thought or did, and would glorioufly reward, or terribly puniſh, all our actions, and even intentions?

*Dech.* I muſt own I think ſo.

*Shep.* In that caſe, no ſecret villainies could hope to eſcape unpnniſhed, tho' they might evade the laws, and ſcreen themſelves from the animadverſions of men.

*Dech.* True.

*Shep.* And a good man on the rack, or in flames, for the cauſe of truth, or in the ſervice of his country, would have good reaſon to ſtand to his purpoſe, and brave the pains and terrors of death, if he were fully perſuaded, that an infinitely gracious and powerful Being ſtood ready to receive his ſoul, and cheriſh it with the tenderneſs of a moſt affectionate Father, to all eternity.

*Dech.* Undoubtedly.

*Shep.* If all the world were of the ſame principles with this man, what a different face, from the preſent, muſt you ſuppoſe this would put on all the affairs of life! What an Heaven would it turn this earth into!

*Dech.* No doubt on't, the conſequence would be moſt happy.

*Shep.* Conſider, Sir, the paſſions of men; are they not very ſtrong?

*Dech.* Yes, generally ſpeaking.

*Shep.* Conſider likewiſe their underſtandings; are they not for the moſt part dark, and incapable either of moderating thoſe paſſions, or fixing them on proper objects?

*Dech.* Men themſelves are to blame for that.

*Shep.* Be that as it will, the thing itſelf is an inconteſtable fact. But further, pray, Sir, conſider habit: does it not add a kind of ſecond nature, nay, rather, a ſort of neceſſity, to the paſſions, when it happens to coincide, and graft itſelf on them?

*Dech.* It does indeed.

*Shep.* Pray tell me, now; are the inconſiderable rewards

wards of the moral ſenſe, altho' never ſo inviolably conferred on good actions, able to bridle ſuch paſſions and habits, prompted and ſolicited by greater wealth, honour, and power, than the ſociety can afford to deal out to every man? He, Mr. *Dechaine*, who foregoes that grandeur, which he hath an opportunity of ſeizing, muſt expect an equivalent ſome other way. On the other hand, are the mere reproaches of the moral ſenſe a ſufficient bar to a wicked action, when ſome furious paſſion ruſhes to the tempting object, with all the violence of a corrupt nature, and an inveterate habit? Conſider *Sextus* and *Cæſar*; the firſt entering the chamber of *Lucretia*, and the latter on the further bank of the *Rubicon*.

*Dech.* And pray conſider *Oſbert* in the chamber with *Brocard*'s wife; *Valentinian* the third, with that of *Maximus*; and *Alexander* the ſixth, preparing a banquet for his rich cardinals. Theſe, Mr. *Shepherd*, were *Chriſtians*, and had your mighty ſanctions before their eyes.

*Shep.* Chriſtians I am ſure they were not.

*Dech.* What, were there Popes who were no Chriſtians?

*Shep.* Pray, Mr. *Dechaine*, don't all Chriſtians believe in the omnipreſence, omniſcience, infinite juſtice, and power of God? And do they not expect a judgment to come, with an Heaven or Hell to follow it?

*Dech.* I believe they do.

*Shep.* Could *Alexander* the ſixth then have been a Chriſtian?

*Dech.* It does not concern me to ſay, whether they were Chriſtians or not: but ſurely, if there be any reaſon for believing in Chriſt, a Pope muſt be acquainted with it.

*Shep.* You deſpiſe the Papiſts for pinning their faith on the papal ſleeve, and yet don't perceive, that you pin your own infidelity on the very ſame filthy ſpot of that ſleeve. If we conſider the anarchy and miſery, made by various contending paſſions in one mind, where avarice and prodigality, anger and fear, pride and envy, ſtruggle for ſuperiority, and diſtract the ſoul, we ſhall find nothing in ſuch a mind, capable of procuring peace, or eſtabliſhing virtue; and therefore, in order either to relieve it from its own grievous diſorders, or to prevent its running into the moſt criminal enormities, the fear of

God

God is to be called in. Let us ſuppoſe, Mr. *Dechaine*, an iſland peopled by *Philip*, his ſon *Alexander* the Great, *Archelaus* of *Macedonia*, the *Dionyſii*, *Piſiſtratus*, *Siloſon*, *Atreus*, *Thyeſtes*, *Egiſthus*, *Paris*, *Achilles*, *Marius*, *Sylla*, *Cæſar*, *Tiberius*, *Nero*, *Heliogabalus*, *Montfort* Earl of *Leiceſter*, *Richard* the third, *Cromwell*, *Rhodope*, *Lais*, *Pariſatis*, *Cleopatra*, *Tullia* the wife of *Tarquin*, *Agrippina*, *Meſſalina*, *Margaret* of *France*, *Catharine de Medicis*, and a competent number of ſuch ſpirits; you will readily grant, I believe, that plots, rapes, treachery, murder, *&c.* would be the very firſt things they would lay their heads and hands to.

*Dech.* That I ſhall.

*Shep.* Let reaſon be called in to regulate and ſuppreſs theſe enormities; will ſhe be able, think you, to do it?

*Dech.* I believe hardly.

*Shep.* Introduce philoſophy, and let her try her ſkill: perhaps ſhe may convert the whole iſland to ſtoiciſm and apathy.

*Dech.* That would be a ſtrange metamorphoſis.

*Shep.* Well; let us ſuppoſe theſe iſlanders, in order to defend themſelves from one another, to enter into a ſociety, and make laws for its ſupport and regulation. What think you? Will thoſe laws be well obſerved, and juſtice duly adminiſtred?

*Dech.* They will be of no uſe, in my opinion, as the parties are all contemners of law and juſtice.

*Shep.* Human expedients, therefore, being of no efficacy, what think you would be the conſequence, if God ſhould ſhew himſelf on his throne, with Heaven and Hell in view, to the aſſembly of theſe iſlanders?

*Dech.* I believe, while ſuch a proſpect was before their eyes, they would be as far from committing any ſort of wickedneſs, as an equal number of the very beſt people that ever lived.

*Shep.* Yes, all their outrageous paſſions would immediately ſubſide. Such a view would in an inſtant bear down the moſt inſolent and rebellious ſpirits among them. Now faith, Sir, when it is ſtrong and lively, puts us in the preſence of Almighty God, puts us into the bar, and places Heaven and Hell in a manner ſenſibly before us.

*Dech.*

*Dech.* And yet in this very bar people have found the way to be as wicked, as elſewhere. Uſurpation, murder, treaſon, poiſoning, are Chriſtian, as well as Pagan enormities.

*Shep.* Such crimes are leſs frequent in Chriſtian countries, than they were among the Pagans, as is evident to any man, in the leaſt acquainted with hiſtory. But have we not already agreed, Sir, that if people of the worſt diſpoſitions ſaw God preſent with them, and watching their behaviour at all times, they could not be guilty of ſuch monſtrous actions?

*Dech.* Yes.

*Shep.* Have we not alſo agreed, that if their faith amounted to a full aſſurance, it would prevent their wickedneſs, almoſt as effectually, as if God were always viſibly preſent?

*Dech.* I believe it poſſibly might, if their faith was very ſtrong.

*Shep.* It follows then, that the wicked actions, committed by perſons profeſſing themſelves to be Chriſtians, were not done by real believers, or Chriſtians.

*Dech.* And it follows again from thence, that as thoſe wicked profeſſors had an equal opportunity of ſeeing into the evidence of Chriſtianity with other Chriſtians, that evidence muſt be deficient, or they had been believers.

*Shep.* All I diſpute for at preſent, is the excellent nature and tendency of our religion. If this way of arguing is to be admitted, the Chriſtian evidence muſt appear very ſtrong; ſince by far the greater number of thoſe, to whom it hath been conveyed, were convinced, and reſtrained, by the faith ariſing out of conviction, from all ſorts of crimes. It is not only the force of an argument, but alſo the ſtrength of reaſon, and candour of mind, with which it is received, that produces conviction. Men bred up in Chriſtian countries, but under the unhappy influence of a moſt untoward nature, of ignorance, luxury, and bad examples, are not likely to lend an open ear to arguments, which, if admitted, muſt put a ſevere bridle on all their paſſions and corruptions. Paſſion, we may be ſure, had in moſt of thoſe wicked men, who profeſſed Chriſtianity, little or no faith to

ſtruggle

ſtruggle with, and ſaith little or no knowlege, candour, or reflection, to found itſelf on.

*Dech.* If ſuch may be the failure of a religion, that requires to be taught, commend me to that which does not depend on parents, prieſts, or maſters, who may neglect to inſtruct us, or defeat their own inſtructions by their bad examples.

*Shep.* If I found ſuch a religion ſpringing up of itſelf within me, I ſhould as little trouble myſelf to inquire farther about religion, as you; or, if I found it planted by mere nature in the minds of others, I ſhould certainly ſpare all the pains I take with my flock.

*Dech.* If you had not nature for an aſſiſtant in teaching theſe ſheep of yours, you could do nothing. She, like a good curate, does all that work, the honour of which you, like other conceited rectors, are willing to take to yourſelf; I mean, all the work that is worth the doing, that is, making honeſt men. But as the Chriſtian methods of making men honeſt are continually canted up to the people, and not a word ſaid to them about their own internal and natural principles, they themſelves come at length to aſcribe their honeſty to your inſtructions, though, in reality, it proceeds intirely from their own natures. Thus the phyſician, who preſcribes a little powder of liquorice, perhaps a bolus of brick-duſt, or ſome other trifle, is paid for the cure, tho' it is wrought intirely by the ſtrength of nature. Doctor, I will tell thee a parable, which may ſerve to illuſtrate this matter better to thee, than any thing I know. A certain poor man travelling homeward with two or three of his children, they grew lazy, and complained they were not able to proceed any farther; upon which the father cut horſes for them from the neighbouring hedge, and, having mounted his children thereon, they finiſhed their journey with great briſkneſs.

*Shep.* This, I think, will not prove, that real horſes are not neceſſary on ſome occaſions. In matters of a low and ſenſible nature, ſuch as painting or geometry, we require to be taught, in order to a ſhort and eaſy acquiſition of knowlege; altho' mankind, by improving, one on the inventions of another, can make a conſider-

able

able progreſs, and may at length arrive to perfection in ſuch matters. But then it is becauſe the objects of thoſe, and ſuch-like arts, are perpetually in their ſight; and their properties, ſo far as is needful for their purpoſes, eaſily enough diſcovered. But it is otherwiſe in reſpect to religion, the objects, and firſt principles of which, lie a little farther out of the reach of apprehenſion; ſo far, indeed, that it is a queſtion with many, whether it is poſſible to arrive at them by the ſtrength of our unaſſiſted faculties. This, Sir, makes a wide difference. We can diſcover a natural beauty in ſenſible objects with an eye untaught; but there are other beauties, which moſt people never ſee, till they are pointed out to them; and, it may be, not perfectly even then. A right or wrong in actions, which ſome affect to call a beauty or deformity, may, in ſome glaring caſes, be diſcovered by a mind uninſtructed; but, in other caſes, this diſcovery, either thro' the natural obſcurity of the diſtinction between right and wrong, or for expedition's ſake, requires to be made by inſtruction. Yet, when this diſtinction, whether by nature or teaching, is diſcovered, unleſs other diſcoveries, ſtill more difficult, are made at the ſame time, it carries nothing of morality or obligation with it, and is almoſt uſeleſs; becauſe few people, if any, will do that which is right, merely becauſe it is ſo; or abſtain from that which is wrong, purely becauſe it is wrong. But if you annex honour and profit to the firſt, and ſhame and puniſhment to the laſt, I mean, ſuch as temporal laws can confer or inflict, theſe will ſuperinduce that kind of obligation called civil, and that only. This obligation, however, will be very inſufficient, unleſs theſe rewards and puniſhments can, by ſome means or other, be conſtantly and equitably adminiſtred; and unleſs the legal honour and profit, or ſhame and ſuffering, are conſiderably and apparently greater, than the honour and profit to be got by doing ill, and the ſhame and ſuffering, that may, in many caſes, attend the doing well. Mankind are influenced and determined in their actions, as *Shafteſbury*, *Tindal*, and all men, who know either themſelves, or others, allow, by ſelf-love. Now the higher the rewards of doing good, and the puniſhments of doing ill, are carried, the

the ſtronger the tie to good actions becomes. If they are infinite, the tie to virtue becomes infinitely ſtrong, when it is duly apprehended. But, as I ſaid, care muſt be taken to have a due adminiſtration of theſe encouragements to virtue, and detriments to vice; otherwiſe they will, in proportion to the defects of this adminiſtration, loſe of their force. Now this can never be provided for, without infinite wiſdom, juſtice, and power, in the aforeſaid adminiſtration. As ſoon as God, who alone is poſſeſſed of thoſe high attributes, is known, or believed to preſide over the world, and to prepare ſuch rewards for virtue, and puniſhments for vice; then, and not till then, the diſtinction between right and wrong becomes religious, moral, and obligatory; and it alſo becomes the intereſt, and muſt be the choice, of every truly rational being, to act in purſuance of that diſtinction on all occaſions, and againſt all the temptations this world can throw in its way. I return, Gentlemen, to this argument, after having ſpoken to it more than once before, becauſe I am ſenſible, Deiſm is mainly founded on, and chiefly recommended to the looſer part of mankind by, a diſbelief of future eternal rewards and puniſhments; and becauſe in this article of our faith conſiſts the marrow and force of all religion. The arguments therefore for it, altho' they are clearly demonſtrative, can never be too often, or too preſſingly, inculcated, eſpecially as there is, in the depravity of human nature, a ſtrong reluctance to them.

*Dech.* I am ſure you muſt be little acquainted with the writings of our Deiſts, or you would own they ſpeak in the higheſt terms of religion, and of future puniſhments and rewards, as things taken for granted.

*Shep.* It is true, *Shafteſbury*, in his inquiry into virtue, ſpeaks favourably of future rewards and puniſhments, and of religion, in general terms; nay, and even of the difficulty of finding out God (1). Both he and *Tindal*, when for the preſent, to recommend their ſyſtems, they turn their beſt ſide to us, ſay, the law of nature is univerſally clear, intelligible, and perfect; yet, in numberleſs places, when they would either run down the inſtructions

(1) Book the firſt, p. 3. 54.

ſtructions given by others, or exalt their own, talk abundantly of the moral ignorance and barbariſm of mankind, and of the neceſſity of inſtruction (1). They both, as I have already ſhewn, labour to prove, that virtue is its own perfect reward, and vice its own perfect puniſhment, in this life; that the religion and law of nature are perfect, and a rule of action to God himſelf; that we ought to love God for his own ſake, and not for the rewards he gives (2). I grant, we ought to love God for his own excellence, as the moſt amiable of all objects; and would love him infinitely more than all things, were we as inclinable, as we ought to be, to love that moſt which is beſt, and did we know him as well as we do other things: but ought we not alſo to love him for the favours we have already received from him? And ſurely this love ought not to hinder, but rather ſtrongly excite, our utmoſt endeavours to ſerve and pleaſe him, on account of the good things he hath promiſed, and the miſeries he hath threatened. As to our loving virtue for its own ſake, which *Shafteſbury* ſpeaks of, as diſtinct from the love of God; I can only ſay, that as ſome love, and others hate it, no matter whether by nature or habit, the love of it can never be put on a more natural, a more ſafe, and generous footing, than to love it becauſe it is the will of God. Nor can we have any reaſon for hating vice ſo ſtrong, as becauſe God hates it, and will puniſh it. He who places the judgment of God, and his eternal indignation at vice, before his eyes, walks by a wiſe and ſafe rule. Surely it is the moſt reaſonable thing in the world for a poor weak man, who knows himſelf to be every moment in danger of tranſgreſſing, to fear the diſpleaſure of an infinitely wiſe, juſt, and powerful Judge. If, however, this fear be ſtrong and uniform, it will preſerve the man, who is bleſſed with it, in his duty: and, in a little time, infallibly guide him up, through virtue, and an innocent conſcience, to the love of God. Having once attained to this height, he hath then the nobleſt principle in the world to act on. He denies himſelf, as vile and unworthy; he goes out from himſelf,

(1) Adv. to an author, vol. 1. p. 299. (2) Chr. as old as the creation, ch. 7.

himſelf, as a low and deſpicable creature; and, tranſported with the moſt pure and exalted of all emotions, fixes his heart on the moſt illuſtrious and glorious of all beings, the moſt gracious of all benefactors, the ſource of all good, and the centre of all duty and happineſs. As he does not conſider himſelf, or his own reaſon, as his legiſlator and maſter, ſo he does not ſeek to gratify or obey himſelf. As he does not look upon a Patron, or a King, to be the firſt object of his ſervices, ſo his attachments are not ſo much to parties or kingdoms, as to the whole intellectual world, of which God is the Head and Father. A Chriſtian, it is true, hath greater reaſon to fear God, than a Deiſt; but, as he knows God to be the fartheſt of all beings from tyranny, ſo his fear can never become ſlaviſh; but is uſually the beginning of true wiſdom, which baniſhes all other fears; and altho' it ſprings from this low and humble principle, yet it rears itſelf to Heaven, and ripens into Divine love. A Chriſtian hath alſo infinitely ſtronger reaſons for loving God, than the light of nature, tho' you ſuppoſe it never ſo great, can dictate to a Deiſt. For what can nature tell the latter, but that God hath made him; impreſſed a law on his heart, by which he will juſtly judge him; and either given him, or left him to, ſuch ſinful diſpoſitions, as make it impoſſible for him to conform himſelf to that law? This is a moſt ſhocking information, and tends ſtrongly downward to deſpair or Atheiſm. But the Chriſtian is informed by his religion, that God ſchemes for his happineſs with the tenderneſs of a moſt compaſſionate Father; that his Son hath taken the nature of man upon him, and, by a moſt painful death, made atonement for his ſins to Divine juſtice, and thereby delivered him from the dreadful curſe of the law; and that the Spirit of God, knowing the manifold infirmities of human nature, like a kind and faithful friend, leads him, as it were, by the hand, through all the temptations and dangers of this wretched life. Here is a foundation for the ſweeteſt hopes, and inducements to the moſt ardent love. Our Libertines, in order to put a ſpecious face on their deſtructive ſyſtem, ſpeak highly of benevolence of humanity, of public love; and ſhew as little of it in their

their actions, as any ſort of men on earth. But were their benevolence really as extenſive as their pretences, it could reach no farther than the boundaries of this narrow world, nay, not ſo far, but only to ſuch as have not, by any real or fanſied injury, provoked their reſentment; and what is this to Chriſtian charity, that does good for evil, prays for its perſecutors, and forms one univerſal ſociety of God, of angels, of dead and living ſaints, of all, in ſhort, that is good, either in Heaven or on earth? The benevolence of a Deiſt terminates, at beſt, in man; but may be ſhewn to an unworthy object, may be perverted into a vile affection by the mixture of other paſſions, and hath always the loweſt kind of ſelf-intereſt, mere temporal preſervation and well being, which mankind, united in ſociety, mutually promote for one another, as its only motive; and, conſequently, whenever a man is ſeverely treated, or baſely uſed, by the world, turns to downright miſanthropy.

*Dech.* No, Sir; natural benevolence ſtill warms the heart with ſentiments of humanity for even bad men and enemies; and natural juſtice will not ſuffer us to hate one man, on account of the injuries we have received from another.

*Shep.* Whatever nature may do in a Deiſt, when left to itſelf, it may, ſurely, do as much in a Chriſtian, who is obliged, moreover, by an expreſs command, to love his enemies, and do good for evil. It is a dictate of nature, to hate our enemies; and it is an infirmity too incident to nature, to be often out of humour, even with our friends and benefactors: but Chriſtian charity, having God for its chief object, and loving mankind, not ſo much on their own account, as for the ſake of God, with eternal happineſs and celeſtial glory for its motive, is in no danger of being perverted by low and unworthy views or affections, nor of being deſtroyed by diſguſt. As God is the only ſource of all good, ſo he ought to be the principal and final object of all love; the centre to which all the thoughts, deſires, and actions, of intelligent beings ought to point. As lines, tending directly to one common centre, can never divaricate, nor obſtruct one another, but muſt ſtill draw nearer and nearer,

the more they approach towards that centre; ſo, in like manner, all true Chriſtians, endeavouring to approach the univerſal object of love, inſtead of being carried out of their way by other objects, ſo as to interfere with, and croſs one another, perpetually draw nearer and cloſer together. All virtue conſiſts of holding on ſteadily towards this grand point in view, and all the degrees of virtue in the ſwifter or ſlower, the more or leſs conſtant, tendency of this purſuit, and all vice in deviating from it to other views or ends. As all lines, meeting in a common centre, unite and loſe themſelves therein; ſo, when all our views, affections, and courſes, meet in God, we ſhall there find true charity and union with him, and all that are his: we ſhall rejoice to lay aſide that particular ſelf, which hath hitherto been the motive of all we did, and, becoming one with God, ſhall, to all eternity, have no other ſelf but him. Now, as no line can be drawn towards a centre, but on ſome *ſubſtratum*, or area; ſo no man can come to God, but through his Son. It is by the rectitude and ſtrength of his covenant, and the ſaving merits of his death alone, that man, weak and unworthy in himſelf, can poſſibly come to God.

*Dech.* After all you have ſaid about Chriſtian charity, I cannot ſee that you found it, or any other Chriſtian principle, on ought elſe than mere ſelf-love, between which and charity there ſeems to be ſo great a contrariety, as makes it impoſſible for the one to ariſe out of the other.

*Shep.* Both *Shafteſbury* and *Tindal*, far as they carry the principle of benevolence, make ſelf-love the ſupreme principle in man (1): it is, however, certain, that this, like all our other affections, being blind in itſelf, requires the aſſiſtance of reaſon to direct its motions towards ſuch objects and means as may promote the real happineſs, and not merely gratify the miſtaken or depraved appetites, of the man. And if the greateſt happineſs of man is placed beyond the ſight of reaſon, then reaſon itſelf ſtands in need of information and direction. If man had no other principle but that of ſelf-love,

(1) Chriſt. old as creat. ch. 2. Shafteſ. vol. I. p. 310.

love, which is the opinion of many, and that were ſufficient to make him good and happy, as far as a mere motive is capable of contributing to that end; in that caſe, we ſhould have no occaſion to inquire about any other principle or motive. But I think it eaſy to ſhew, that we have alſo a principle of benevolence, or charity; and as eaſy, likewiſe, to trace this principle of charity to ſelf-love, as its true ſource, notwithſtanding the contrariety you apprehend between them, which, if I be not greatly miſtaken, never happens, but through ſome error of judgment, that leads us to a wrong kind of ſelf-love, or charity. Don't you love him, Sir, who does you ſome conſiderable ſervice, or good office?

*Dech.* I do.

*Shep.* And does not your love proceed from the pleaſure he gives you by that act of kindneſs?

*Dech.* No doubt on't, it does.

*Shep.* It is therefore the love of yourſelf, that produces love in you towards your benefactor; and does not this love, thus produced, move you ſometimes to make him ſuch returns as are a real loſs to yourſelf, of money, intereſt, or ſomewhat elſe, on which you ſet a value?

*Dech.* I never conſider thoſe returns as loſſes, becauſe they gratify my love.

*Shep.* You certainly do; for I believe you will own, you would rather chuſe to ſhew your gratitude, if it could be done, and would anſwer his occaſions as well, by ſervices that would coſt you nothing. Beſides, to gratify your love for him, is, ſtrictly ſpeaking, as ſelfiſh, as gratifying your love for any thing elſe; for, in all ſuch caſes, you love the object for the good you derive from it, and you carry your love into execution, on account of the pleaſure you find in ſo doing. What is it induces you to love your own, rather than a foreign country?

*Dech.* My life, my liberty, my property, are all defended by my own, and often attacked by other countries.

*Shep.* Would you riſque your fortune, or your life, for your country?

*Dech.* Yes, if I thought, by ſo doing, I ſhould render it any ſignal ſervice.

*Shep.* It appears, then, that you love your country only becauſe you love yourſelf; and that ſelf-love may induce a man to ſacrifice even his life.

*Dech.* But what is it makes me love mankind in general?

*Shep.* It is a doubt with me, whether you love all mankind, or not; and whether you do not love only thoſe, from whom you have received, or hope to receive, ſome benefit; and hate thoſe who have done, or are likely to do, you an injury.

*Dech.* But I do love thoſe, from whom I neither have received, nor hope to receive, any ſervices, merely becauſe they are men.

*Shep.* There is, I own, ſuch a thing as natural affection in men towards one another; but whether this affection ſprings from ſelf-love, is a queſtion not eaſily decided. You love mankind, perhaps, becauſe they are men; that is, becauſe they are men like yourſelf, and like thoſe you love: this ſort of affection, however, which is not very ſtrong, is almoſt wholly habitual, and may proceed originally from ſelf-love. You are a man, and therefore, according to the ſaying of the comedian, you think every thing, that relates to mankind, concerns yourſelf, in ſome meaſure.

*Dech.* Upon your ſelfiſh principle, thoſe men, ſuch as *Codrus*, and the *Decii*, who ſacrificed their lives purely for others, muſt have been mad.

*Shep.* If thoſe perſons did not hope for a reward in another world, of more value than life, they were certainly the moſt vain-glorious and delirious of all mankind. No ſober man gives away his fortune, nor even a part of it, for nothing; much leſs will he ſacrifice his life, for which any man, in his ſenſes, would give up all his fortune, tho' it were never ſo great, till he is ſtrongly poſſeſſed with hopes of an equivalent. He is abſolutely mad, who, when he might avoid it, without any ſuch hopes, runs himſelf into dangers or diſtreſſes, or gives up life itſelf; and he is next to a mad-man, or a fool, who does the ſame on precarious hopes of an equivalent.

Thoſe libertines who are at a great deal of pains to baniſh from the minds of others the hopes and fears of futurity, are little better than mad: for what are they to get for all their trouble? what recompence for the infamous character of ſeducers, ſince infidelity hath no rewards? The principle of ſelf-love, and ſelf-preſervation, is certainly the moſt powerful of all our inſtincts; of which, if they muſt be called laws, this is certainly the firſt. He that denies this, and ſays he loves others better than himſelf, is either a fool, or a liar. If, merely for a friend, a miſtreſs, or the public, he ſacrifices his life, he is a fool, who groſly miſtakes his own intereſt; or a madman, who knowingly acts againſt it. No wiſe man gives up his ſelf-intereſt in one thing, but in order to promote it in another, that ſeems greater, or more certain. As to life, there is no equivalent for it but eternal life; and as we can have no tolerable aſſurance of that but by revelation, ſo no man can rationally chuſe death, but upon Chriſtian principles. No man, therefore, can attain to true heroiſm, but the Chriſtian; he, alone, can have reaſon to deny himſelf the honours, profits, and pleaſures of this world, which diſhoneſty, or evil arts, might offer him; or to meet death, with all its terrors, from which cowardice or treachery might deliver him.

*Dech.* Your picture of a Chriſtian hero makes him but a mere mercenary.

*Shep.* And yours, of any other ſort of hero, makes him an errant mad-man, or a fool.

*Dech.* There can be no hero without virtue, nor virtue without diſintereſtedneſs. That is, no doubt on't, a fine ſort of virtue and heroiſm, which encounters a leſs evil for fear of a greater, and which, in hopes of an infinite reward, ſurrenders a trifling intereſt or pleaſure. At this rate, the moſt narrow-hearted miſer, the baſeſt coward, or even the vileſt thief, may be ſet up for an hero.

*Shep.* It is true, they might, if they had ſenſe enough to ſee and conſider their greateſt intereſt: and ſurely nothing, Sir, can ſo ſtrongly recommend any principle, as that, if it were heartily cloſed with, it would infallibly transform the very worſt of men into ſaints and heroes.

We may ſay, on the other ſide, that yours is a moſt glorious kind of virtue, that is either unable to prevail on a man voluntarily to undergo the ſlighteſt ſuffering; or, if it does, makes it folly and diſtraction in him to do it.

*Dech.* Is he, then, a fool, who ſuffers for virtue? Or he an honeſt man, who is hindered from ſtealing merely by the gallows?

*Shep.* Theſe queſtions are only calculated to amuſe. He, Sir, is a fool, who ſuffers death for a name; and virtue, without religion, without love for, and dependence on God, without any manner of good to be found in it, or derived from it, is but a mere name. He who is kept from ſtealing, only by the gallows, is far from being honeſt; becauſe he will lye, perjure, cheat, and ſteal too, as often as he can do it with hopes of eſcaping the gallows. But he who abſtains from ſtealing, and all other immoral actions, becauſe he is ſure God will ſee and puniſh the committal of them, will never commit an ill action; and he who will never do an ill action, is certainly a very honeſt man; nay, he loves a good action, and hates an ill one, on account of their conſequences, and becauſe God does: and therefore the gallows, or any other kind of puniſhment, is not all he conſiders. You will own, nevertheleſs, that he who is deterred from ſtealing by the fear of the gallows, is a good man, in compariſon of him who ſteals under the very gallows. But he is better, who, in hopes of a glorious reward, as well as for fear of a moſt grievous puniſhment, reſiſts temptations, denies himſelf unlawful pleaſures, and does all the good he can. And he is beſt of all, who, having the inferior affections and paſſions bridled by the proſpect of eternal puniſhments and rewards, raiſes the ſoul itſelf, by love and gratitude, to a noble deſire and endeavour to pleaſe God, as the moſt beneficent and amiable of all beings. This man admires the beauty of a good, and abhors the foulneſs of an ill action, as much, nay, more than any man, who is leſs religious; becauſe, whatſoever lights mere nature may lend other men to ſee them with, he hath the ſame; and, beſides, conſiders the one as infinitely diſpleaſing, and the other as extremely acceptable, to that Being, whoſe goodneſs he loves, and whoſe

whoſe power he reveres, above all things. Any goodneſs, in the natural man, is a compliment to his own nature, and to himſelf; but the goodneſs of a Chriſtian is love and duty to his greateſt friend and benefactor: his hopes and fears do honour to God, becauſe they are ſo many teſtimonies of confidence and veneration for Almighty God, founded on faith in his own laws. They are leſs ſelfiſh, too, than the pretended virtue of the ſelf-ſufficient and natural man (which makes him his own director, his own governor, his own puniſher and rewarder) inaſmuch as they terminate without himſelf, in that gracious Being, to whom he is infinitely beholden, in that juſt Judge, from whom he can hope for neither connivance, nor partiality, ſuch as a deceitful heart might be apt to ſhew itſelf.

ALTHO' I cannot help thinking it hath been clearly proved, that the mere light of nature, as we now find it in ourſelves, cannot furniſh us with a ſufficient ſtandard for our moral conduct, not to ſay an adequate law, to regulate the actions of men, and that the Chriſtian religion does actually preſcribe a ſufficient law; it will be further uſeful to obſerve, that the thoughts of men, in regard to any internal law, will be always mainly influenced by their ſentiments concerning the chief good. Whatſoever power or force may do, in reſpect to the outward actions of a man, nothing can oblige him to think or act, as often as he is at liberty, againſt what he takes to be his chief good, or intereſt. No law, nor ſyſtem of laws, can poſſibly anſwer the end and purpoſe of a law, till the grand queſtion, What is the chief happineſs and end of man, be determined, and ſo cleared up, that every one may be fully ſatisfied about it Before our Saviour's time, the world was infinitely divided on this important head: the philoſophers were miſerably bewildered in all their reſearches after the chief good. Each ſect, each ſubdiviſion of a ſect, had a chief good of its own, and rejected all the reſt. They advanced, as *Varro* tells us, no fewer than two hundred and eighty-eight opinions, in relation to this matter; which ſhews, by a ſtrong experiment, that the light of nature was altogether unable

to ſettle the difficulty. Every man, if left to the particular biaſs of his own nature, chuſes out a chief good for himſelf, and lays the ſtreſs of all his thoughts and actions on it. Now if the ſuppoſed chief good of any man ſhould lead him, as it often does, to violate the laws of ſociety, to hurt others, and to act againſt the general good of mankind; he will be very unfit for ſociety, and, conſequently, as he cannot ſubſiſt out of it, an enemy to himſelf. Robbers, thieves, aſſaſſins, rebels, are all inſtances of this; and ſo are, alſo, thoſe more cunning, but more dangerous perſons, who know how to evade the laws, or even, by their aſſiſtance, to gain unjuſt advantages to themſelves, and hurt ſociety. As ſelf is, unqueſtionably, the ruling principle in man, it is highly neceſſary to every man to know in what his main intereſt conſiſts, and how to obtain it: and as that happineſs (if we allow the world to be the work of a wiſe and beneficent author) muſt be ſuch, as is conſiſtent with the happineſs of others; ſo it cannot be riches, pleaſure, honour, power, or any thing elſe, about which mankind may be tempted to contend; and yet it muſt be one and the ſame to all men: for we cannot imagine there is a diſtinct kind of chief good, or happineſs, allotted to every individual. But what it is, or by what means to be arrived at, is a queſtion, which, if nature, reaſon, or philoſophy, could have done it, might have been determined long before our Saviour came into the world.

*Dech.* How the antient philoſophers came to differ ſo widely about this matter, I cannot gueſs; but this I am ſure of, that nothing is more plain and obvious to reaſon, than that the chief *happineſs of man conſiſts in living up to the dictates of his nature* (*a*). I will, for the preſent, grant you, that the principle from which all human actions flow, is the deſire of happineſs. Now *the happineſs of all beings whatever conſiſts in the perfections of their nature; and the nature of a rational being is moſt perfect, when it is perfectly rational. God, who does nothing in vain, would in vain have planted the deſire of happineſs in mankind, if he had not given them reaſon to diſtinguiſh ſuch actions as make for their happineſs, from ſuch*

(*a*) Chriſt. as old as Creation, chap. 3.

*ſuch as oppoſe it.* I have here given you, Sir, the right notion of our chief end and good; and you will allow, I believe, that I have not been beholden to revelation for it.

*Shep.* But *Tindal*, from whom you borrow it, and whoſe revelations are, I find, of more authority with you, than thoſe of the Scriptures, took the principle, upon which he falſly concludes this to be our chief happineſs, from revelation. He ſays, *We are made in the image of God*; which, I am ſure, neither he, nor any man elſe, could have known, had he not been told it by revelation. He ſays, moreover, and produces no other reaſons for it but a bold paſſage from Dr. *Scot*, that *The happineſs of God conſiſts in the purity and rectitude of his nature; and, conſequently, as man is made in the image of God, the happineſs of man muſt be nothing elſe but the perfection of his own nature.* And hath the great *Tindal*, at length, by the force of his own natural reaſon, ſettled the grand difficulty, that diſtracted all the geniuſes of antiquity? To the eternal confuſion of himſelf, and all other abettors of natural light, he hath taken the maxim, on which he hath built his hypotheſis, from that very revelation he brings it to refute; and can no otherwiſe ſupport his conſequence, but by determining in what the happineſs of God conſiſts, which God himſelf only knows. But if you make the chief good of man to conſiſt barely in living up to the dictates of his nature; I muſt tell you, this is neither that good, nor even the means of obtaining it; for there are ſome dictates of nature, in its preſent blindneſs and corruption, which, if obeyed, would bring on unavoidable deſtruction. Nor is the perfection of our nature the chief happineſs of man, but the means of it. Let us ſuppoſe futurity out of the queſtion, and we ſhall quickly find, that the moſt perfect man alive, in the rage of a fever, in the pangs of the ſtone or gout, or ſtretched on the rack, with no hopes of an hereafter, is far enough from being in the enjoyment of the greateſt happineſs. Now the beſt of men are as little exempted from poverty, oppreſſion, ſickneſs, pain; and other natural evils, incident to this life, as other people; perhaps I might ſay, with

truth, they are rather more expoſed to them. You make the perfection and happineſs of a man to conſiſt in the perfection of his reaſon. Pray, hath not a man other faculties, beſide reaſon, ſuch as apprehenſion, imagination, memory?

*Dech.* He hath.

*Shep.* Hath he not, alſo, paſſions, appetites, inſtincts, &c.?

*Dech.* He hath.

*Shep.* In his preſent ſtate he hath a body too. Now I ſhould think, tho' his faculty of reaſon were never ſo perfect in itſelf, yet, if his apprehenſion be dull or confuſed, his imagination irregular and wild, his memory weak and irretentive, his paſſions, appetites, and inſtincts, corrupt and vitiated, and his body unſound and ſickly; he is very far from being perfect.

*Dech.* In that caſe, Sir, his reaſon cannot be perfect; and therefore, when we ſay, the reaſon of a man is perfect, we mean, that all his inferior faculties, his paſſions, and his body, which are the inſtruments of his reaſon, are ſound, and in good order.

*Shep.* Reaſon, I find, is very comprehenſive; and a ſickly man is always a bad reaſoner: let this, however, paſs. Pray, Sir, is reaſon given us in order to any end, or purpoſe?

*Dech.* Yes; that we may form right judgments of things.

*Shep.* What is the uſe of right judging?

*Dech.* Right judging is, in order to right acting.

*Shep.* And is it of any advantage to us, to act rightly?

*Dech.* It is that, alone, can make us happy.

*Shep.* Right reaſoning, then, is not our happineſs, but only the means of our happineſs, and not the only means, neither: for if, after having reaſoned rightly, we do not act as rightly, which often happens; the better we reaſon, the leſs excuſeable we are, and, conſequently, the farther from happineſs, if happineſs follows virtue only. Neither do the means of our chief happineſs conſiſt in living up to the dictates of our nature: nature often dictates ſuch actions to us as are evil in themſelves, and, if done, would deſtroy us. Luſt, pride, wrath, ambition, envy, are

are all natural to us; and the moſt ſenſible Libertines I ever converſed with, called ſo many of our paſſions and appetites, as they themſelves delighted in the gratification of, the laws of God and nature. He who obeys theſe dictates of his nature, adds the fewel of habit to their fire, which was but tôo violent before, and will be far enough from arriving, by theſe means, at either the perfection, or happineſs of man.

*Dech.* Is it criminal to gratify the paſſions, or appetites, which God hath given us? Or hath he given us ſuch as are evil?

*Shep.* No; but our paſſions and affections are not as he made them: they are corrupt, and prone to the wildeſt exceſſes; and, to gratify ſuch, in the full extent of their natural dictates, would be highly criminal.

*Dech.* What is our reaſon given us for, but to regulate our paſſions and deſires according to the eternal fitneſſes of actions and things, of which reaſon is the only judge allowed us?

*Shep.* Reaſon alone, even when it judges beſt, is not able to bridle our headſtrong paſſions; and, as it is extremely ſubject to prejudice and error, it is oftener found, among men who follow nature, in the inferior office of purveying for the gratification of the paſſions, and apologizing for their vices, than in that of curbing and ſubduing them. It is true, while things remain as they are, there is an unalterable fitneſs and unfitneſs in actions; it is alſo true, that reaſon is the immediate dictator of what is fit, or otherwiſe: but then reaſon is unable to dictate rightly, till ſhe herſelf is inſtructed; and, when ſhe dictates beſt, it is without effect, till ſhe is backed by ſome authority, and ſtrength, ſuperior to her own. Every finite nature, as *Plato* hath obſerved, muſt, in order to its perfection, and true happineſs, be governed by ſome ſuperior nature. Man, left wholly to himſelf, will only degenerate, and fall from bad to worſe. If he will not ſuffer himſelf to be led to perfection by his Maker, he muſt ſink into an utter depravity.

*Dech.* And pray, Sir, what is the *ſummum bonum* of Chriſtians?

*Shep.* The enjoyment of God to all eternity.

*Dech.* And are not the perfection of our nature, and the enjoyment of God, one and the ſame thing?

*Shep.* No more than a good ear is the pleaſure of muſic: the rectitude and perfection of nature is not our happineſs; it is only previous and neceſſary to it.

*Dech.* Is it not, then, the means of our happineſs?

*Shep.* It is the immediate means; but acting up to the mere dictates of our nature, inſtead of raiſing nature to its true dignity and perfection, will only ſerve to corrupt and debaſe it.

*Dech.* I ſtill think your chief good too ſelfiſh to be the foundation of true virtue, which all men ought to love for its own ſake.

*Shep.* You may think as you will: but to love virtue, becauſe it produces a conformity of our nature to that of God, and of our actions to his will; and becauſe, by theſe means, it makes us happy; is a moſt rational and noble principle; is, in ſhort, the only principle that can teach us to deſpiſe ourſelves. How proud is man, when none is preſent, but ſuch as are inferior to him in underſtanding and dignity! when he is with thoſe whom he knows to be his ſuperiors in wiſdom and goodneſs, he ſhrinks in, and begins to think humbly and meanly of himſelf. Bring him into the preſence of God, and he immediately loaths and deſpiſes himſelf, and turns all his love and admiration to an object infinitely more excellent and glorious. Now faith, by placing us in the preſence and inſpection of God, fills us with humility, and diſtruſt of ourſelves, and love for God; which two diſpoſitions are the moſt powerful means to perfect our nature here, and to make us happy hereafter. Does not nature dictate to every man the purſuit of his own good, preferably to every thing elſe?

*Dech.* Yes; but ſhe, alſo, bids him be kind and beneficent to other men.

*Shep.* Whatever it is that bids us be beneficent to others, it only ſo far obliges us to beneficence, as doing good to others is conſiſtent with our own good.

*Temp.* The diſtinct provinces of ſelf-intereſt and humanity, or benevolence; their ſometimes oppoſing, and ſometimes reſulting from, each other; their reſpective powers

powers and operations, points already touched on, are ſtill but imperfectly apprehended by my underſtanding: the clearing up of theſe might be a great ſtep towards ſettling the grand queſtions about our chief good, and the ruling principle of our actions.

*Shep.* Taking human nature as we find it, and conſidering it with due attention and candour, we muſt, I think, conclude, that the grand, or, rather, only principle of a man's actions, is the deſire of his own happineſs. It is thro' this that other principles, which ſeem oppoſite to it, are enabled to operate upon the ſoul. In every man there is a ſet of inſtincts, or appetites, accommodated to particular objects; ſuch as hunger, thirſt, curioſity, *&c.* that draw in the ruling principle towards the centre, and employ it in providing for the gratification and preſervation of himſelf. There is, alſo, in him, another ſet of inſtincts, or affections; ſuch as humanity, gratitude, compaſſion, *&c.* that dilate his ruling principle, and call it forth to objects which promiſe a a more generous gratification, altho' not ſo immediately connected with the preſervation of himſelf: the inſtincts, or affections, of both claſſes, operate upon him by pain, till they are carried into execution, and then by pleaſure. It is equally to relieve himſelf from this pain, and to enjoy this pleaſure, that he feeds the poor, or himſelf. It is a great error to imagine, that any of theſe inſtincts, whether of the former or latter claſs, ſuch, for inſtance, as humanity or compaſſion, are by nature contrary to ſelf-love; they are only inlets to a noble kind of ſelf-gratification, and engines to play off the energy of the ruling principle to a diſtance from the individual. Conſidered either as the one, or the other, they ſerve, under ſelf-love, to excellent purpoſes; employing all its force in acts of beneficence, which are ſometimes ſo widely extended, and carried to ſuch an height, as to conſtitute the hero, the patriot, or the martyr. It is only by miſtake that any affection or appetite, of either claſs, ever runs counter to the real intereſt of the man, or prevails on his ſelf-love to operate againſt its own natural end, the chief good of the individual.

*Temp.*

*Temp.* I begin to comprehend your ſyſtem, and ſhall have a perfect idea of it, if you will tell me, particularly, how it is, that ſelf-love produces charity, or becomes the ruling principle of ſocial affection.

*Shep.* Self-love does not produce charity; for charity is an inherent inſtinct of the heart, as well as ſelf-love, but ſubordinate to it: but I can eaſily tell you how ſelf-love produces an *act* of charity. When you ſee a perſon in miſery, the tie of a common nature, that binds you to him, fills you with pain, which you naturally deſire to exchange for the pleaſure you expect in relieving him. Theſe ſenſations awaken the ruling principle, which inſtantly ſeeks its own relief and pleaſure in the relief and comfort of your fellow-creature: but if you expect, that your act of charity will be regarded, by Almighty God, as the act of a faithful ſteward, as an act of gratitude to him, in thus relieving the diſtreſſes of his beloved creature; your ruling principle is then employed by a double motive, and exerciſes all its force. As to your other inquiry, How it is that ſelf-love becomes the ruling principle of ſocial affection; I anſwer, that, even in a ſtate of nature, as we love mankind, we ſeek to gratify ourſelves in converſing with them, and entering into a mutual intercourſe of good offices. Beſides, it muſt be obſerved, that ſelf-preſervation ſtrongly enforces the neceſſity of ſociety to man, who cannot ſubſiſt apart from others; and benevolence ſtill further qualifies him for a ſocial life. But a man very often thinks the intereſt of the public oppoſite to his own, and, whenever he does, prefers the latter, becauſe the purſuit of his own good is his firſt and ſtrongeſt principle. Now the light of nature does not always point out his real good to him, nay, hath never been able to direct him to his chief good. Hence it comes, that the good of one man is often ſet in oppoſition to the good of another, to the hindrance and damage of both; and in oppoſition to that of the public, to the deſtruction of ſociety. It is in vain to ſay, that while men regard no higher will than their own, and look no farther forward than the preſent life, they will have any other good in view, than ſuch as is found in this life, or that they will ever conſider

ſider the good of ſociety as their own, further than as it actually and viſibly, and, I may ſay, immediately, promotes their own. I entered into ſociety, ſays man, for my own ſake, and not for the ſake of others; and if the ſociety is againſt me, as it thwarts my ends, I will be againſt it. So *Phalaris*, *Syloſon*, *Cæſar*, *Cromwell*, reaſoned; ſo all men reaſon, who break or evade the laws. What does nature ſay all the while? Why it puſhes them violently towards their own good, and mere reaſon does not ſhew them any greater good than the enjoyment of much power, and the poſſeſſion of much wealth. It is likewiſe in vain to ſay, that nature proves her dictates to be the voice of God: they are often wicked and contradictory, and ſhe is ignorant of God, and, conſequently, of the chief good. Yet whatever the nature and reaſon of man take to be his chief good, towards that they eagerly hurry him over all public regards: hence lawſuits, fraud, violence, oppreſſion, rapine, wars.

*Dech.* Yes, among Chriſtians as well as Heathens.

*Shep.* I imagined I had already ſufficiently demonſtrated, that ſuch perſons as are guilty of the moſt enormous crimes, cannot be Chriſtians. It is the misfortune of this ſort of debates, that a point already proved muſt be proved over again, and yet ſtill be queſtioned. Was *Cromwell* a Chriſtian, who proſtituted only the mere enthuſiaſtic pretence of religion to tyranny and uſurpation? A Chriſtian, truly ſuch, believes his chief good to conſiſt in pleaſing God, and enjoying him for ever; and with this infinite good in view he cannot, as a Chriſtian, do injuſtice for the ſake of any thing in this world, nor indeed be much affected with mere worldly conſiderations and attachments, although never ſo equitable in their tendency. When faith is as ſtrong as the evidence of Chriſtianity ought to make it, and the intereſt of the man, or of men in general, requires it ſhould be, it carries the views and attachments of him whom it poſſeſſes to matters of infinite conſequence. But where it is weak, in proportion to that weakneſs the natural man prevails over the Chriſtian; and ſo it comes to paſs, that thoſe vices and crimes, that are really owing to the depraved nature of the man, and the weakneſs of his faith, are often,

often, but ignorantly and maliciouſly, aſcribed to the weakneſs of our religion; whereas nothing can be more plain, than that if Chriſtianity were duly attended to, duly believed and obeyed, ſuch enormities would never happen. The ſocieties of this world are conſidered by Chriſtianity only as probationary and preparative to the univerſal ſociety above; ſo that none are to be admitted there, but ſuch as have proved themſelves amenable, and juſt, and beneficent here; who have poſtponed their own fleſhly wills to that of God, their own pleaſures to his commands, their temporal and private intereſts to the general intereſt of mankind, and to a much nobler and higher intereſt of their own, in a life of infinitely greater importance. Upon the whole, that the enjoyment of God is the chief happineſs of man, may appear evident from theſe conſiderations: Firſt, that man is by nature made capable of knowing God: and he who knows God, muſt be ſenſible he is infinitely more excellent and amiable, than all other beings; and that it is the greateſt happineſs to enjoy him. Secondly, as nothing can give him an enjoyment of God, but the refinement and perfection of his own nature; ſo nothing but the knowlege of God, and the moſt ardent love for him, can prompt and enable him to labour effectually in the adorning and perfecting his own nature. If he knows God, he hath the nobleſt example to copy after, and the faireſt original to tranſcribe from, that the whole ſyſtem of being can afford; and, as he knows it is impoſſible to enjoy God without being pure as he pure, and perfect as he is perfect, he hath the moſt powerful inducement to watch over himſelf, to cleanſe his corrupted nature, and fit his ſoul for thoſe all-ſeeing eyes, that cannot behold iniquity; and that piercing light, which ſhines through all things, and lays open every ſecret. Laſtly, he conſiders with himſelf, that, if he can but obtain the favour of God, and be admitted to the bleſſed viſion of this glorious Being, he ſhall have infinite wiſdom to direct him, infinite power to defend him from all evil, and infinite goodneſs to beſtow on him new occaſions, and eternal acceſſions of happineſs. All other conſiderations that can be offered to ſelf-love, ſhrink into nothing, when com-

compared to this. The opportunities of indulging his other good diſpoſitions will be equally great and happy. He will have infinite excellence to admire and love. He will have power, commenſurate with his love and gratitude, to ſerve his great Benefactor, and the delightful ſatisfaction of being always ſure his ſervices will be well accepted by his gracious and indulgent Maſter. He will receive infinite favours, and have it alſo in his power to ſhew he is grateful; which, to a generous ſoul, is the moſt exalted perfection human happineſs can arrive at. He will have Angels to converſe with. He will be preſent when new worlds are made; and, looking into the cauſes of things, will ſee more in one moment than *Newton*, in his whole life, was able to gueſs at; he will feaſt his tranſported ſoul with the wonders of creating wiſdom and power. Yet, great as this happineſs will be, if, ſpeaking by compariſon, I ſhould ſay it will make but a ſmall part of his enjoyments, I ſhould ſay the truth; for he ſhall ſee God. All that is great, or delightful, or glorious, is ſummed up in this. The hopes of it are ſufficient to turn this otherwiſe unhappy life into a paradiſe, and change the martyr's fiery furnace into a bed of roſes; and the thing itſelf is what the language of mortals is unable to utter, or the heart of man to conceive. Is it from this glorious proſpect that Libertiniſm would turn our eyes downward upon a wretched world, and fix our affections on things below? And ſhall Libertiniſm call itſelf Philoſophy and Wiſdom? Yes; but God calls it *the wiſdom of this world*, and tells us it is *fooliſhneſs*. It is the child of vain curioſity, and falſe appetite; and continues, as it began, to feed on forbidden fruit, and teach its admirers the knowlege of ſin.

IT ſurpriſes me not a little, that the antient philoſophers, who inquired with ſo much anxiety and debate after the chief good, ſhould have given themſelves little or no trouble about the greateſt evil; for ſelf-love is as much concerned to know, and ſelf-preſervation to avoid, the one, as it is to purſue the other. Beſides, as a prudent man will voluntarily forego a ſmaller good to obtain a greater, and give up all occaſions of limited plea-

pleaſure or ſatisfaction to obtain an infinite good, ſo will he alſo undergo a ſmall evil to avoid a greater; and encounter all the limited evils incident to human nature, that he may eſcape an infinite evil. Now if ſuch an evil there be, it infinitely concerns us to know it.

*Dech.* There may be, there certainly is, a chief good and evil; but whether they be infinitely great, is a queſtion. As the nature of man is only finite, to me it ſhould ſeem, that his happineſs and miſery muſt be alſo finite and limited. But be that as it will, our greateſt evil muſt be the reverſe of our greateſt good; and, conſequently, he who knows the one cannot be ignorant of the other. Now, as our greateſt good conſiſts in the perfection, ſo our greateſt evil muſt conſiſt in the depravity, of our nature.

*Shep.* We have already ſeen, that the perfection of our nature is not our greateſt good, but only the immediate means of it. It will follow therefore, if your rule of oppoſites is admitted, as I think indeed it ought to be, that the utmoſt depravity of our nature is not our greateſt evil, but only the immediate means of it. The ſame arguments that led us to the former concluſion, muſt lead us to the latter alſo; and, therefore, I ſhall not repeat, but refer you to them. As the greateſt happineſs of man conſiſts in the eternal enjoyment of God, and his favour; ſo the greateſt evil, by the rule of oppoſites, muſt conſiſt in the diſpleaſure of Almighty God, and its effects, namely, an eternal excluſion from him, to which the extreme depravity of our nature muſt infallibly ſubject us. But by what effects, and to what degree, the diſpleaſure of God will manifeſt itſelf to a creature thoroughly depraved, revelation only can inform us; nay, revelation only can tell us, that certain actions, to which nature prompts us with the greateſt importunity, if committed, eſpecially if often repeated, tend to the utter depravation of our nature, and, in conſequence of that, to our greateſt miſery. This we have already proved; and it follows, that revelation only can point out to us this grand and intereſting ſanction of the divine law.

*Dech.*

*Dech.* Your revelation tells you, that the greateſt miſery of man conſiſts in the eternal diſpleaſure of God, and its effects, namely, confinement to a lake of fire and brimſtone for ever. This ſort of puniſhment, to be inflicted on a mere ſpirit, is impoſſible and abſurd; for mere corporal inflictions cannot affect an unbodied ſpirit.

*Shep.* Altho' we ſhould underſtand the Scriptures literally in theſe and ſuch-like expreſſions, yet no abſurdity will ariſe from thence, if, as the ſame Scriptures inform us, the ſoul is to be reunited to the body at the reſurrection. Such an union will make corporal pains and torments as poſſible to us then, as they are now. But, however, as among the expreſſions, by which the miſeries of the damned are ſet forth to us in Scripture, there are ſome that cannot well be taken literally, ſuch as concerning the worm that dieth not, by which are to be underſtood the everlaſting reproaches of a guilty conſcience; ſo the reſt are probably, in a great meaſure, figurative, and uſed to convey the ſtrongeſt and moſt affecting idea poſſible, to minds accuſtomed to ſenſible notions, of the future miſeries to be ſuffered by the reprobate.

*Dech.* It may be ſo; but, ſurely, that revelation could never have come from God, which repreſents him as unjuſt and cruel, as puniſhing to all eternity, with the moſt frightful tortures, the tranſgreſſions of his poor frail creatures. And if the juſtice of God, which cannot puniſh finite offences with infinite and endleſs miſery, makes the belief of ſuch a puniſhment abſurd and blaſphemous; his mercy, which is alſo infinite, muſt make it ſtill more ſo. If there were nothing elſe to prove a revelation falſe, that pretends to come from God, but its recommending to our belief ſuch notions of his ſeverity, as repreſent him unjuſt and cruel, that alone would do it effectually. *David*, it ſeems, had other notions of God; for he aſks, *Shall thy jealouſy burn like fire for ever?* We may be ſure, the true and natural anſwer is, No. When God ſhall have puniſhed his diſobedient creatures in proportion to their offences, juſtice being then ſatisfied, mercy will, at length, take place; and, ſurely, a temporal puniſhment,

niſhment, eſpecially if it be long and great, may be equal to the moſt enormous offences of men.

*Shep.* That which happens in reſpect to the puniſhments annexed to God's law, happens alſo in reſpect to the penalties of human laws. He who is threatened with death for robbery or murder, thinks what he is to ſuffer too grievous, and wiſhes it were lighter. But the lawgivers, magiſtrates, and ſubjects, whoſe ſafety lies in the great ſeverity of his puniſhment, think otherwiſe. He alſo who, knowing himſelf guilty, is threatened by religion with eternal vengeance, wiſhes God would only correct him, and then make him infinitely happy; that is, that he would no otherwiſe puniſh him for the greateſt enormities, but by rendering his nature more perfect, in which he places the chief happineſs of man; in order to which, if ſome medicinal ſufferings are neceſſary, altho' he cannot clearly ſee how, he does not think it altogether unjuſt in God to lay them on him. Theſe fond wiſhes of his deceitful heart he works up into a ſort of arguments for an univerſal purgatory, and ſtrengthens them all he can with others as fallacious and groundleſs, drawn from the ſuppoſed inſignificancy of his ſins, from God's indifference as to all a finite creature can do, from the juſtice of God, confounded with, and loſt in, his infinite mercy, and the like. Theſe arguments help to make him eaſy when he reflects on his former tranſgreſſions, and afford him more licence and latitude as to his future conduct. Thus man deals by himſelf, as ſoon as he is perſuaded he hath a right to be his own lawgiver. But the juſt and good God, who does not give every man a law peculiar to himſelf, and calculated for his preſent pleaſure, and private conveniency, conſulting the general good of all his creatures, gives one law to all, and proportions its ſanctions to the infinite importance of its ends, rather than to the degree of virtue or vice in the agent, conſidered as of greater or leſs importance to the good or evil of the world; for if the motives to virtue were only equivalent to the inducements to vice, the will muſt be ſuſpended.

*Dech.* This charges injuſtice upon God.

*Shep.*

*Shep.* By no means. If happineſs, infinite in duration, is promiſed to a being, who by his beſt actions can never deſerve it, in caſe he ſhall approve himſelf by the law of God; there is no injuſtice done him, if he is alſo threatened with a puniſhment, infinite in duration, upon his diſobedience, altho' by his worſt actions he ſhould not be able to bring on others a degree of miſery equal to that he is to ſuffer for ſo doing. In this I ſuppoſe him an intelligent being, and endued with a perfect freedom of choice. If ſuch a being ſhall, through a wilful courſe of wickedneſs, purſue an infinite evil, rather than an infinite good, who is to blame for what ſhall follow? Surely himſelf only. If the temptations to ſin are but equally balanced by the ſanctions of the law, that law can never ſufficiently enforce virtue, as being of too little weight to ſink the ſcale, in which virtue is placed. That there is a ſtrict proportion between crimes, and the temptations that prevail on us to commit thoſe crimes, is manifeſt; becauſe it always requires a greater degree of temptation to produce a greater crime, than it does to produce a leſs; for inſtance, the ſame degree of temptation, that makes a man a thief, would not induce him to commit murder, to which his nature hath a greater reluctance. If then our crimes and temptations are proportionable to each other, and if it is neceſſary, that the detriments to wickedneſs ſhould exceed the inducements, it will follow, that thoſe detriments muſt alſo exceed our crimes; for how otherwiſe can thoſe crimes be prevented? If the pleaſure a man finds in doing evil is equal to the pain he is to endure, he hath an equivalent for his ſufferings, and is neither a gainer, nor a loſer, by his guilt. But it is not he alone who is to be conſidered in this matter. The good of the whole, in which he makes but a part, is to be provided for, and ſecured; but by ſuch methods indeed, as ſhall not break in upon his moral freedom of choice, that is, by rewards and puniſhments of the greateſt importance, anſwerable to the happineſs of God's univerſal kingdom, of which they are the ſecurities. When ſuch rewards and puniſhments are beforehand propoſed to free and rational beings, and they chuſe, notwithſtanding,

ing, to tranſgreſs; what elſe is this, than deſpiſing the rewards, and chuſing the puniſhments? Now, if men are capable of ſuch a conduct, and I appeal to fact and experience, whether they are or not; ſurely the ſanctions, altho' infinite, are not too great. What then is to be done with ſuch delinquents? If, in ſpite of all the malignancy and perverſity of their nature, they can be turned to excellent account in God's kingdom, what hinders, but that this ſhould be done? They will not obey; let them therefore contribute to the eternal obedience of others, by the eternal example of their own ſufferings. God, in no inſtance, ſhews his tenderneſs for the good, or his concern for virtue, more effectually, than in this ſeverity to the wicked. He knows, that the heart of man is partial to itſelf, and wicked; and therefore, in tenderneſs to other men, leaves it not to dictate a looſe and indulgent law to itſelf, but gives it a plain rule of duty, and enforces that rule with eternal rewards and puniſhments. By acting thus, he gives an higher demonſtration of his goodneſs to all men, than could be ſhewn in a leſs intereſting law; for ſurely, Sir, you muſt own, in reſpect to the puniſhments annexed to his law, that you, and others, are better defended againſt any deſigns I might be tempted to form upon your life or fortune, if I am fully perſuaded I ſhall be puniſhed with eternal torments for ſuch deſigns, than you could be, if I believed I ſhould only undergo ſuch temporal ſufferings for them, as muſt at length terminate in the reformation and perfection of my nature, and ſettle peace between God and me. God alſo, by threatening me with eternal puniſhments for ſin, ſhews infinite goodneſs to me in particular, becauſe he furniſhes me with the ſtrongeſt argument for a good life, he puts into my own hands the moſt powerful inſtrument to perfect my own nature with, and conſequently, in ſo doing, affords me the moſt efficacious means of my own happineſs. You, Sir, inſiſt, that the infinite greatneſs of the rewards and puniſhments annexed to the Chriſtian law is too compulſory; but every day's experience may teach you, Sir, that they are by no means too great for the end, that they compel

compel nobody, and prove of too little force with the generality of men.

*Dech.* But you yourſelf have often maintained, that if they were firmly believed in by all men, they would inevitably make all men good. This, I think, proves them compulſory.

*Shep.* Mankind, however, are at liberty to believe in them, or not; for, as they are not ſet directly before our eyes, but only proved to our reaſon by arguments, we have it in our power to turn away our minds from thoſe arguments, and give them up to ſuch as tend to induce a contrary perſuaſion. Men find it but too eaſy to tutor themſelves to certain ſoothing perſuaſions, and chuſe ſuch opinions as they pleaſe, eſpecially men who think for themſelves, and place ſelf in an indulgence of their deſires and pleaſures. But it does not follow, that if the arguments for infinite rewards and puniſhments were ſuch as muſt convince all men, and make them all amenable to the Divine law, they would therefore make ſlaves of all men. If we ſuppoſe judgment already paſt, and the wicked, in the ſight of Angels and Men, ſent away to a place of endleſs torment; thoſe, who, having ſeen this ſight, are admitted to the joys of Heaven, are ſtill free, as to their future conduct, and have a natural power to do good or evil. And if they ſhall be free, who have ſeen ſo evidently the fearful puniſhment of ſin, and feel ſo ſenſibly the ſweets of virtue, we muſt ſuppoſe mankind to be ſtill more at liberty, or perhaps, I ſhould ſay, more diſpoſed, to tranſgreſs; who, tho' in this life they have the firmeſt faith in future rewards and puniſhments, yet are ſurrounded with innumerable weakneſſes, and violent temptations, to counterbalance the influence of their faith. Pray, Mr. *Dechaine*, are mankind free to chuſe good or evil, when they are ſet before them?

*Dech.* If they appear to be what they really are, we cannot help rejecting the one, and chuſing the other; for no man can chuſe evil, as evil, nor reject good, as good.

*Shep.* In reſpect then to the choice of good or evil, whether greater or leſs, no man is free.

*Dech.*

*Dech.* But we may miſtake the one for the other, or the degrees of either; and ſo are not neceſſarily determined in our choice.

*Shep.* At that rate, then, our freedom of choice ariſes intirely from our ignorance. But if we are neceſſarily determined to the choice of good, and the rejection of evil, then we have, in that reſpect, no liberty; and, conſequently, the ſetting our greateſt good and evil before our eyes, cannot deprive us of liberty, becauſe they cannot take from us that which we never had. If, on the other hand, we are at liberty to chuſe either good or evil; and this ſhould ſeem neceſſary to make us accountable agents, to make us rewardable or puniſhable, or, at leaſt, to prevent our reſolving all ſin into the ſin of ignorance; our liberty cannot be infringed, nor injuſtice done us, by placing good and evil before us, and makeing us ſenſible of the difference, in order to a prudent choice. And as dealing thus with us, in reſpect to lower degrees of good and evil, can in no ſenſe be an hardſhip or grievance to us, ſo neither can we ſuppoſe ourſelves aggrieved in having infinite happineſs and miſery placed within our reach, and thoroughly laid open to us, ſince we are at liberty to chuſe which we will.

*Dech.* But as God might make the miſery leſs, if he pleaſed, we cannot ſuppoſe he would make it infinite; ſince ſuch is the ignorance and frailty of man, that he may poſſibly chuſe it under ſome maſk, or appearance of good.

*Shep.* Here you, who make the natural light ſo ſtrong as to be able always to point out to every man the diſtinction between good and evil, at leaſt, between the greateſt good, and the greateſt evil; will not allow it ſufficient, when aſſiſted by revelation, to determine our choice between infinite happineſs and miſery.

*Dech.* Between the happineſs and miſery you ſpeak of, Sir, the light of nature enables us to make no diſtinction, becauſe it points out no ſuch happineſs and miſery to us. And as to what your revelation ſays on that ſubject, you muſt excuſe me, if I do not believe it, till I have better reaſons for ſo doing than I ſee at preſent.

*Shep.* The reaſons for believing in revelation have, I find, in reſpect to you, been but too long inſiſted on already, altho' we have as yet but touched on thoſe reaſons, any further, than as we have endeavoured to induce the neceſſity of a revelation from the utter inſufficiency of the natural light. But as to the preſent queſtion, whether the eternity of future puniſhments can reflect at all on the juſtice of God, I believe it may be eaſily cleared up. If your Prince, Sir, ſhould bid you chuſe, whether you would enjoy a very plentiful and honourable employment under him, during the reſt of your life; or be confined, till the day of your death, in a moſt loathſome dungeon; would you think he dealt unjuſtly by you?

*Dech.* No, Sir, provided my Prince had any right to confine me to a dungeon.

*Shep.* If he gave you ſuch a choice, and you choſe the dungeon, it would be you yourſelf that confined you, and not he. God propoſes Heaven and Hell to the choice of a rational and free being: if that being ſhould chuſe the latter, what injuſtice is done him? For his folly, and his wickedneſs, he deſerves what he is to endure; and therefore hath no ſort of reaſon to complain. Beſides, as no merit of his could have intitled him to the joys of Heaven, the happineſs propoſed to him is matter of bounty; and, conſequently, as there is great and undeſerved goodneſs ſhewn him in the one caſe, and the ſtricteſt juſtice in the other, he hath all the reaſon in the world thankfully to cloſe with the terms propoſed to him in our religion by Almighty God. I believe there is no man on earth, who, in any other caſe, would not be extremely pleaſed with the propoſal of a conſiderable good, and an equal evil, provided he were perfectly at liberty to chuſe which he pleaſed. He could not, in ſuch a caſe, avoid reaſoning thus with himſelf: "This propoſal puts me in "a much better condition, than I was in before, becauſe "I have it now in my power to add greatly to my happineſs; and altho' I may, by a wrong choice, make "myſelf miſerable, yet, as I am free, the juſt apprehenſion I have of the evil, only ſtrengthens my motives to the choice of the good; and if the deſire of "good were not ſufficient to fix my choice, my fear and

"dread of evil could not fail to do it." But, ſuppoſing mankind had no eternal happineſs propoſed to them at all, but only eternal miſery threatened, in caſe they ſhould tranſgreſs the laws of God, I cannot by any means ſee how it could be thought unjuſt. Thoſe laws of ſociety, that are purely penal, are never on that account deemed unjuſt, becauſe the general good of the community requires ſuch laws; and all who are ſubject to them, are able to obey them, and conſequently deſerve what they ſuffer, if they are puniſhed for tranſgreſſing them. Now all laws are, or ought to be, proportioned to the ends propoſed by them; and as the ends propoſed by the laws of a great ſociety are of more importance than thoſe of a leſs, ſo the penalties annexed to thoſe laws in a great ſociety ought to be of greater importance and cogency, than thoſe of a ſmall one. It is for this reaſon that the head of a family cannot puniſh with death, nor that of a commonwealth with damnation. This laſt ſort of puniſhment alone is adequate to the great ends of God's univerſal kingdom, and to the infinite majeſty and juſtice of its Governor. We are told in Scripture, that many Angels, highly dignified, and infinitely happy in Heaven, have rebelled againſt God; and we ſee thouſands of men every day here on earth, who ſhew a contempt for all laws human and divine. What a precedent would it be for God's other intelligent creatures, who are yet in their duty, to ſee theſe delinquents eſcape unpuniſhed! And ſhould they be only given over to wholſome ſeverities, and ſuch as, according to *Tindal* and you, are for their good, the laws of God muſt, in that caſe, loſe one half of the force and dignity neceſſary to the ends propoſed by them. Angels and men behold what is a doing here on earth, and mark the ways and meaſures of Divine Juſtice, from whence they draw the motives of their own obedience. When this world ſhall be called to judgment, the whole Hoſt of Heaven will be preſent; and having beheld the infinite goodneſs of God demonſtrated to the juſt in eternal happineſs, and the horrible example made of the evil in their everlaſting miſery, will carry away from that great event ſuch motives to duty, as may be ſufficient to preſerve them therein for ever.

Beſides,

Beſides, we have no reaſon to imagine, that the Divine œconomy will not make a further uſe of the wicked, after judgment ſhall be paſſed upon them. There are probably places and ſtations in various parts of the univerſe, where Devils and diabolical men may be employed to excellent purpoſe, at the ſame time that they are tormented, in carrying on, although againſt their wills, the deſigns of Providence. We may rationally enough ſuppoſe a kind of mines for the malefactors of God's kingdom to work in, where they may labour, in the quality of ſlaves, for the benefit of better beings, whom they hate and envy. As the happy, from motives of love and gratitude, will, in the midſt of their eternal hallelujahs, be active in the ſervice of their gracious Maſter; ſo it is agreeable to the analogy of things to believe, that the miſerable, as a part of their puniſhment, will, in the midſt of their blaſphemies, be forced to concur with the ſchemes of God, and, contrary to their nature and intentions, be employed in doing good. As the calls for theſe ſervices, and the neceſſity of an example, ariſing from the puniſhment of wicked beings, may be eternal, ſo their duration in this ſtate of ſervitude and miſery may likewiſe be eternal. Be this as it will, there is yet another ſtrong and natural reaſon for the eternal miſery of the wicked, which ſeems to make it unavoidable. Evil habits long indulged, become natural, and make reformation impoſſible. Were, however, a cure for ſuch inveterate and rooted maladies of the ſoul attempted, it muſt be by ſuch exceſſive and laſting ſeverities, as no patience could endure, and ſuch therefore, as muſt be attended with a deep and obſtinate deſpair, out of which nothing but blaſphemy and defiance againſt God could ariſe; that is, out of which only greater depravity, and more enormous guilt, could be produced. If the hardened offender is to continue for ever wicked, he muſt of conſequence continue for ever miſerable. We may, upon the whole, I think, judge how neceſſary the belief of eternal puniſhments is to our living good lives, by this; that all men, in proportion as they hanker more or leſs after forbidden objects, or unlawful pleaſures, labour with more or leſs earneſtneſs and art to perſuade themſelves,

that the puniſhment of ſin will not be eternal; and that all men, generally ſpeaking, actually lead better or worſe lives, in proportion as they entertain ſtronger or weaker fears of what is to come. Now that principle, which is ſo neceſſary to the good behaviour of every private perſon, and of conſequence to the public good, cannot, as we took occaſion to obſerve before, be a falſe or groundleſs principle, ſince God would never have ſo conſtituted the world, as to make the good of all mankind to depend almoſt abſolutely on a falſhood, a religious falſhood.

*Dech.* Give me leave alſo to make my obſervation on the whole of what was ſaid concerning infinite puniſhments and rewards. The greateſt villain will be good, if you offer him a ſufficient bribe, and threaten him with a ſufficient penalty, in caſe he continues to act like a villain; I mean, he will act as if he were good, although his real principles will be ſtill the ſame. This I am ſure of; to threaten us with eternal puniſhments, and to allure us with infinite rewards, in order to make us virtuous, can never anſwer the end, becauſe true virtue can never ſpring from ſelfiſhneſs or fear; neither is this method at all ſuited to the nature of free and rational beings. To frighten them into their duty by the dread of fire and brimſtone, is to deſtroy their freedom: and to entice them to be virtuous by the promiſe of eternal crowns and kingdoms, is to deal with them as children, not on the footing of reaſon, but deſire. Now true virtue can never be founded on any thing elſe, but freedom and reaſon.

*Temp.* You forget, Sir, that Mr. *Shepherd* endeavoured, and I think, not altogether unſucceſsfully, to ſhew that the reaſon and freedom of man are made the baſis of the Chriſtian virtues, notwithſtanding the application of infinite rewards and puniſhments. He made theſe ſanctions of the Divine law neceſſary in the firſt ſtep towards virtue, and provided an higher principle, namely, the love of God, to take up the mind, already diſciplined by theſe ſanctions to ſome ſenſe of duty, and exalt it to the higheſt pitch of goodneſs. What you ſaid on this ſubject, Mr. *Shepherd*, affected me not a little; but I am ſtill

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at a loſs to conceive the tranſition from the lower motives to the higher, and how it is, that the ſelfiſh dread of miſery, and deſire of happineſs, ſerve to inſpire us with the love of God. Could you be a little more explicit and demonſtrative on this point, it would be of ſingular uſe to the cauſe you are defending; for altho' ſelfiſhneſs cannot be, by its own nature, the very baſis of virtue, yet if it neceſſary, and preparatory to a nobler principle, this will ſufficiently recommend it.

*Shep.* If Mr. *Dechaine* is under any miſtake in the preſent diſpute, it proceeds from hence, that he forms too high an idea of the generoſity and dignity of human nature in its preſent condition; and, in conſequence of that idea, concludes, that man may, and ought to be won to virtue, by the mere love of abſtract virtue alone. But our knowlege of mankind will not ſuffer us to draw this concluſion. The firſt hold, by which the mind is to be ſeized, is the deſire of happineſs, and the dread of miſery. To theſe, all parents, tutors, maſters, and governors, are forced to apply by effectual rewards and puniſhments, under the diſcipline of which after the mind of a young perſon hath for ſome time been formed, it acquires by experiment an approbation of virtue, and diſlike of vice; the firſt of which is ripened into love, and the latter into deteſtation, by habit. Hence the froward and diſingenuous boy is improved into a man of humanity and honour. In like manner the ſoul, under the influence of religion, being at firſt awakened by deſire and fear, is reclaimed to an abſtinence from vice, and an endeavour to be virtuous. Soon after this ſhort initiation, it begins to taſte the ſweets of virtue, which it had never done, had it continued vicious. Now its reliſh for virtue ariſes, not ſo much from an abſtract love thereof, as from an experimental proof of its good effects, already felt in part, and hoped for in a much fuller meaſure from the favour and approbation of Almighty God. It is not long after theſe firſt-fruits, till a larger harveſt is reaped; for the ſoul, being now diſentangled from the tramels of vice, from impure imaginations, from groſs and ſenſual pleaſures, breathes upward in the clearer air of religion, and, mounting on medi-

tation and devotion, as on the wings of an Angel, viſits the ſprings of Divine love, from whence Creating Goodneſs, and Redeeming Mercy, pour upon it in full ſtreams of pleaſure, infinitely more tranſporting, than all that the eye can ſee, or the ear hear. To perfect and confirm the ſoul in this moſt happy diſpoſition, the Spirit of God infuſes into it his heavenly conſolations, and fills it with the love of God. Then the ſoul, inſtead of the fears and agonies of mind, felt in the commencement of its ſpiritual birth, feels unutterable touches of hope and joy. Then flow its tears, from an high ſenſe of love and gratitude, faſter than formerly from the deep ſenſe of its ſins. In this manner, Mr. *Templeton*, *do fear and trembling work out the ſalvation*, and, in due time, produce the happineſs, of a true Chriſtian.

*Temp.* This proceſs hath, I own, ſomething very natural in it, and gives us a beautiful idea of Chriſtianity.

*Dech.* It ſavours much of cant and enthuſiaſm; and gives, after all, but a mercenary foundation to virtue.

*Shep.* You do not conſider, Sir, what the eternal reward propoſed by the Chriſtian religion is: it is the enjoyment of God for ever, which cannot be obtained without loving God for his own ſake, and for his infinite goodneſs to us. The love of God is the nobleſt principle, and the happineſs of pleaſing him the moſt exalted motive, by which the actions of an intelligent being can be influenced. And as to the dread of eternal miſery, if it be a low motive to the doing of ſome actions, and to the abſtaining from others, it is the better fitted to low minds, and therefore, at worſt, rational. If there is a mind that cannot be won by all the infinite goodneſs, and mercy, and long-ſuffering patience of God, why ſhould not ſuch a mind have ſomewhat to fear, proportionable to the baſeneſs and malignity, to the unconquerable ingratitude, and the immoveable inſenſibility, of its nature? Do you think, Mr. *Templeton*, that, upon the footing of juſtice, he who hath done incomparably more miſchief, than good, in the world, ought to have a lot aſſigned him, in which his ſufferings ſhall be as nothing, and his felicity unſpeakable?

*Temp.* Reaſon and juſtice will never allow it.

*Shep.*

*Shep.* Suppoſing a wicked man puniſhed with the moſt exquiſite torments, during the longeſt conceivable ſeries of ages, if he were at length to exchange his miſeries for the joys of Heaven, as his ſufferings would bear no proportion to his enjoyments, ſo the whole of his lot could no-way quadrate with his demerits; beſides, his expectation of deliverance could not fail conſiderably to abate the ſeverity of his torments, inſomuch that thoſe torments could neither by himſelf, nor others, be looked on as a puniſhment, but only as a ſhort and ſalutary purgation, in order to an eternity of happineſs. As ſuch a diſcipline muſt be a great encouragement to wickedneſs, I cannot help thinking, a baſe and ill-diſpoſed mind ought to have ſomething further to fear.

*Temp.* I really think it ought, and I own you have ſaid enough to clear the *juſtice* of Almighty God from any imputation on account of eternal puniſhments; but I think you have been far from reconciling the doctrine to his mercy. After ages ſpent in miſery, and a thorough example having been made of the wicked, if their reformation becomes, as you think it will, impoſſible, I believe God will greatly mitigate their tortures, or reduce them to nothing. There is ſomething within one, that is infinitely ſhocked at the thoughts of eternal torments, and ſeems to tell us, a good and compaſſionate God will ſome time or other put an end to the miſeries of the damned.

*Shep.* That within you, which ſeems to tell you ſo, may be ſin; which, fearing for the paſt, and earneſtly deſiring more latitude for the future, than religion will allow, pleads powerfully with reaſon, for the ſoothing hope of a final deliverance from miſery.

*Temp.* That is not the caſe in me; for I am ſhocked at the thoughts of another's being eternally miſerable, when my own hopes of happineſs are at the higheſt. I have often ſuppoſed myſelf in heaven, and, even then, have found, that the eternal miſeries of my fellow-creatures would greatly damp my joys, and fill me with pity and pain; nay, I have carried my ſuppoſition farther, and repreſented the man I abhorred moſt, on account of his enormous crimes in general, and his cruel

treatment of myſelf, as confined to eternal flames; and I found I could not bear the thoughts of it. If now I, who am merciful and compaſſionate, perhaps, in a lower degree than many other men, could thus be affected with the mere ſuppoſition of my greateſt enemy's being eternally tormented; how much more tender muſt we ſuppoſe an infinitely merciful God to be, in relation to the ſufferings of his own unhappy creatures!

*Dech.* And when you conſider, *Templeton*, that thoſe creatures never ſinned, but thro' the mere infirmity of that nature God had given them; and, even when they did ſin, never conſidered themſelves as acting againſt the authority of Almighty God, never intended, in their worſt actions, any the leaſt inſult on him, or his laws, but only the gratification of their own depraved appetites and paſſions; this will make your reaſoning againſt the belief of eternal torments ſtill the ſtronger.

*Temp.* It does, indeed, add conſiderably to their force.

*Shep.* You proceeded, in your way of arguing with yourſelf, Mr. *Templeton*, intirely on ſuppoſitions. You firſt ſuppoſed your own apprehenſions of eternal miſery to be intirely out of the queſtion; and yet you cannot tell but they might have ſtill been at the bottom of all your reaſonings on this ſubject: the mind is apt to deceive itſelf, in ſuch caſes as theſe, and often thinks for itſelf, when it believes it is only thinking impartially for others. Again, you ſuppoſed yourſelf in heaven, and perceived that, even there, you could not help being concerned for the eternal miſeries of the damned; but all the time of this ſuppoſition you were only on earth, and ſubject to ſome ſmall apprehenſions, probably, for yourſelf. You cannot, at preſent, tell how you will ſtand affected, when in heaven, towards the contemners of virtue, and eternal happineſs; towards the wilful corrupters of themſelves, towards the oppreſſors of mankind, towards ſuch as chuſe to ſerve the devil, and herd with him and his horrible aſſociates for ever, towards the enemies of God, and the oppoſers of his glory, and human happineſs. As to what you have ſaid, Mr *Dechaine*, to encourage Mr. *Templeton* in his way of think-

ing about eternal puniſhments, it will, I believe, appear to have little in it, when it comes to be cloſely conſidered. God did not give us a ſinful nature: nothing, ſurely, could reflect more impiouſly on his goodneſs, than to ſuppoſe he did. Our firſt parents corrupted themſelves and us, and, to counterbalance our original corruption, which we were not acceſſory to ourſelves, God hath given us a religion, and a portion of his Holy Spirit, ſufficient to reinſtate us in that capacity of obeying him, from which our firſt parents, by their tranſgreſſion, fell: and, even when we neglect to apply theſe means, and thereby are led into a vicious courſe of life; if we repent, and return to the uſe of thoſe means, he hath provided an atonement for our offences in the death, and a method of reconciliation with him thro' the interceſſion, of our bleſſed Redeemer. Again, it by no means follows, that, becauſe mankind do not, in their bad actions, intend to inſult God, and violate his laws, they therefore are not actually guilty of both: they know there is a juſt God; they know his will; they alſo believe he will judge them hereafter; and, if they have done what he commanded, reward them with eternal happineſs; or, if they have tranſgreſſed his laws, that he will puniſh them with eternal miſery. He who knows, or firmly believes, theſe things; and yet wilfully chuſes vice inſtead of virtue, evil inſtead of good, and perſeveres in that monſtrous choice, as long as he lives; is a deſpiſer of God, his laws, and all the happineſs he can beſtow, or miſery he can inflict. Nay, he all along believes God will look upon him as ſuch, and knows he commits all his evil deeds in the very preſence and ſight of God; yet he goes on; and you, to excuſe him from rebellion and inſult, ſay he acts thus in obedience to his depraved appetites and paſſions. But what is there more in that apology, than to ſay, he regards the gratification of his own wicked and abominable will more than the dictates of conſcience, more than the promiſes of a gracious, and the threatenings of a juſt and all-powerful God? This fond excuſe, which corrupt nature would make for itſelf, is refuted, and the relief it therein ſeeks from the terrors of future juſtice is prevented, by what happens in this

world, every day, and before our eyes; for men, who are moved by the corruption of their nature, and without a direct intention to inſult Almighty God, being guilty of drunkenneſs and lewdneſs, ſuch is the appointment of God in the natural conſtitution of things, ſuffer poverty, ſickneſs, and untimely death, as the mere effect of their crimes. He who breaks the laws of his country, does not do it merely to inſult the ſupreme magiſtrate, and ſhew his contempt for thoſe laws; yet, nevertheleſs, he does actually deſpiſe the one, and inſult the other. I really believe, Mr. *Templeton*, you earneſtly deſire to know the truth, and are open to conviction on religious ſubjects.

*Temp.* There is nothing in this life I deſire ſo ardently.

*Shep.* In order to that moſt excellent end, you will, I believe, give me an ingenuous anſwer to the queſtion I am going to aſk you.

*Temp.* I certainly will.

*Shep.* Don't you find yourſelf more inclinable to the gratification of a criminal deſire, in proportion as you are, at any time, leſs apprehenſive of an eternal puniſhment for ſo doing?

*Temp.* I muſt own, I do.

*Shep.* When you conſider the infinite mercy of God apart from his juſtice, and look on the puniſhments, annexed to his law, to be only temporary; do you not perceive yourſelf, as it were, untied, and more prone to ſin, than when you conſider God as infinitely juſt, and his puniſhments as infinitely terrible?

*Temp.* I owe too much to truth, to deny it.

*Shep.* Such a mind as yours can hardly fail to find out the truth, and lead you to happineſs. May I aſk you one queſtion more?

*Temp.* With the greateſt freedom; and I will anſwer you, as if there were a window in my breaſt, thro' which you might ſee whether I ſpoke the real truth.

*Shep.* Was there not a time when you were more fully perſuaded, than you have been of late, that the puniſhments of ſin will be eternal?

*Temp.*

*Temp.* When I was very young, I made no question of the matter; but for these six or seven years past I have either doubted, or wholly disbelieved, the thing.

*Shep.* Did you not stand more in awe, and were you not more afraid of doing a wicked action, under the influence of your former persuasion, than under that of the latter?

*Temp.* I should but impose on myself, and resist the truth, if I did not own I was. Since I began, in my own imagination, to set bounds to the punishment of sin, I have (God forgive me!) set little or no bounds to my pleasures, many of which were, I am afraid, highly prejudicial to the souls of others, as well as my own.

*Shep.* It is evident, then, that the belief of eternal punishments is necessary to a good life; and, if it is necessary to such an end, I say, again, it cannot be vain, or groundless.

*Temp.* To this argument, drawn from within myself, I can make no reply; yet I am still shocked at the seeming inconsistence between the infinite mercy of God, and the eternity of future torments.

*Shep.* Let this shock be changed into an utter abhorrence of sin, and a deep apprehension of God's displeasure, and it will deliver you from the wicked course of life, into which, it seems, the want of it hath unhappily betrayed you. As the devil could quote Scripture, in an attempt upon the human nature of Christ; so he artfully argues with you, in favour of vice, from your just and respectful idea of God's infinite mercy. But the sins you have fallen into, in consequence of his arguments, and in obedience to your own natural corruptions, shew evidently, that he argued deceitfully from good principles.

*Cunn.* That way of talking, about the devil, is idle, and superstitious: I hope the devil hath never argued with Mr. *Templeton* at all.

*Shep.* If you, Sir, will not suffer us to ascribe vice and wickedness to the suggestions of the devil, we must either ascribe it to nature, notwithstanding your defence of all her dictates, or to some emissaries of the devil, that have

been tampering with one of the faireſt, and moſt virtuous minds, I ever had the happineſs to be acquainted with.

*Cunn.* Your hint, Sir, is moſt ſhockingly rude, but, at the ſame time, moſt contemptible, becauſe it is perfectly inſignificant.

*Shep.* I hope it is not altogether inſignificant to him, for whoſe uſe I intended it. If he makes a right application of it, I aſſure you, Sir, I am in little pain how your conſcience, or that of any body elſe, ſhall apply it.

*Temp.* Mr. *Cunningham*, you have yourſelf given occaſion to this too ſevere *innuendo:* however, I cannot help admiring and loving the zealous frankneſs of Mr. *Shepherd*, who is not hindered, by forms and *decorums*, from ſpeaking his mind, when he thinks his duty, and the recovery of a poor ſoul from bad principles, and wicked courſes, call upon him for openneſs and reſolution.

*Shep.* I hope God will take me out of the world, before a falſe complaiſance, or even ſtronger worldly conſiderations, ſhall render me deaf to ſuch a call. But as you, Sir, who know Mr. *Cunningham* better than I do, have thought my *innuendo* too ſevere; I beg his pardon for it, and hope he will not again provoke the too great warmth of my temper, by calling what I ſay, idle and ſuperſtitious, at leaſt till he hath firſt proved it to be ſo. Let him, moreover, conſider, that he who is ready to apply a general reflection to himſelf, makes above one half of the cenſure.

*Dech.* And pray, Doctor, remember, that he who, thro' a miſtaken zeal, commits hoſtilities in the defence of God's cauſe, when milder methods would be more becoming, and more effectual; does but give vent to his own pride and ſpleen, and betray the cauſe he pretends to ſerve.

*Temp.* Oh! Sir, Mr. *Shepherd* hath corrected himſelf; and this unhandſome ſort of chat only ſerves to ſuſpend our uſeful inquiries.

PRAY, Mr. *Shepherd*, have you any further objections to the Deiſtical creed?

*Shep.*

*Shep.* I have two very material objections to it, ſcarcely touched on yet.

*Temp.* What are thoſe?

*Shep.* I think the Deiſts talk too boldly, and, if they do not know a great deal more of the Divine nature, than either the light of their own nature, or revelation, can inform us, very abſurdly, concerning God, when they tell us he is obliged to obey the laws of nature, and that thoſe laws are eternal, and indiſpenſable.

*Dech.* The law of nature is no other than the law of reaſon; and reaſon, truly ſuch, always diſtinguiſhes right from wrong, and obliges all good and rational beings to chuſe that which is right. Now as God is the beſt, and moſt rational, of all Beings, he muſt be more influenced by reaſon, than any other being. He does that which is right, becauſe it is right; and, were it not right, antecedently to his will, it could not be the object of his choice. The right or wrong of actions and things does not depend on mere will and arbitrarineſs, I mean, does not depend on even the will of God, but on the nature and fitneſs of circumſtances and things, which is certainly eternal, and unalterable; ſo that what is good, could never have been evil; and what is evil, could never have been good. It is a contradiction to God's own nature, either to do that which is evil, or to turn evil into good, or good into evil. To do good, and avoid evil, muſt have been the Divine rule of action from all eternity; and, conſequently, as that rule muſt have been eternal, ſo muſt it, alſo, have been indiſpenſable: he who ſays the contrary, ſpeaks blaſphemy. For nothing, ſurely, can be more derogatory to Almighty God, than either to ſay he can do wrong, or that he can change the nature of right and wrong, and deſtroy the diſtinction between them. If, then, the rule of right reaſon is that which God himſelf acts by, in all things, it muſt, of conſequence, be the rule of action to all his rational creatures, unleſs we may ſuppoſe, that God would, on any occaſion, make it the duty of a rational creature to do that which is wrong; that is, to act by a rule contrary to his own. Why do we ſay God is infinitely wiſe, good, and juſt; but becauſe he always does that which is moſt wiſe, moſt

moſt good, and moſt juſt? And why do we call him a moſt wiſe and equitable ruler, but becauſe he requires no other rule of action to be obſerved by his rational creatures, than that which he always obſerves himſelf? God will never do that which is wrong, nor will he ever deſire any of his creatures to do that which he himſelf would not do, were he in the place and circumſtances of that creature.

*Shep.* You ſay, Sir, I think, that God, and all other rational beings, are, on all occaſions, obliged to do that which is right, and abſtain from that which is wrong?

*Dech.* I do.

*Shep.* And do the right and wrong of actions depend on the nature and fitneſs of things?

*Dech.* They do.

*Shep.* You mean, I ſuppoſe, by things, when you ſpeak of the fitneſſes of things, ſuch things as have been fitted to one another; and not ſuch things as are no-way relative.

*Dech.* Yes, Sir.

*Shep.* Had not all relative beings once a beginning?

*Dech.* No doubt on't, they had.

*Shep.* Their fitneſſes, therefore, muſt have been older than themſelves; or, otherwiſe, the law, or rule of action, reſulting from thoſe fitneſſes, could not have been eternal.

*Dech.* The fit and unfit of things exiſted in the Divine mind from all eternity, and therefore are eternal.

*Shep.* The law, then, does not reſult from the things, or their nature and fitneſs; but the things, and their fitneſs, from the law.

*Dech.* How is that?

*Shep.* Why, you ſay the law of fitneſs is eternal, and the nature of things, temporary; therefore the law was before the things; and, conſequently, could not have reſulted from them.

*Dech.* It is true, I do ſay ſo; but I mean, in ſaying this, that God framed all things according to the plan or archetype of things exiſting in his own mind from all eternity; ſo that the eternal law of reaſon gave birth to all

all the forms and relations of things. This, however, does not hinder the law of human duty to reſult from the fitneſſes of things.

*Shep.* If things, then, had been made otherwiſe than they are, other duties, than thoſe which at preſent bind us, muſt have reſulted from thence; and this would make the nature of right and wrong interchangeable.

*Dech.* Things are wiſely made, and God could not have made them otherwiſe.

*Shep.* Was God neceſſarily determined to the work of creation? Or was that work matter of choice and free-will?

*Dech.* It was matter of choice.

*Shep.* Was he tied down to the preſent forms or relations of things? Or could he have given other forms and relations to things, if he had pleaſed?

*Dech.* He could have produced things in no other forms, nor with any other relations, than ſuch as were wiſe, good, and fit.

*Shep.* But as he is under no neceſſities of any kind, nor compulſions, he could have found out, and beſtowed on the materials of this world, other forms and relations; and all of them as wiſe, as good, and as fit, as the preſent. You ſpeak of a plan and archetype of things exiſting in his mind from all eternity; did he contrive that plan himſelf? Or was it a neceſſarily exiſting part of the Divine nature, coeval with his being and attributes?

*Dech.* It exiſted for ever in his foreknowlege.

*Shep.* He could not, then, have choſen to abſtain from the work of creation, or to have created any other thing, or otherwiſe than as it is.

*Dech.* This would make him a neceſſary agent, both as to the ſubſtances and forms of all things.

*Shep.* So I think. The truth is, Sir, when you ſpeak of God, if you do not confine yourſelf to ſuch aſſertions, in relation to him, as are neceſſary to your own occaſions, and, conſequently, capable of being known, and cleared up, by reaſon; but give into bold ſpeculations, above the capacity of man; you cannot help running into the moſt unfathomable myſteries, to call them by

no

no harder name. God, Mr. *Dechaine*, made all things as he pleaſed: he ordered and conſtituted, according to his own will and pleaſure, the whole frame of things, immaterial and corporeal; and it is therefore we ſay, he ſhewed infinite wiſdom and goodneſs in the creation. For how can we call him wiſe, or good, for making any thing which he could not have abſtained from making, nor made otherwiſe than he did? The nature and fitneſs, the forms and relations of things, which were not yet in being, did not determine the will of God, but reſulted intirely from thence; and out of thoſe, again, reſulted a fitneſs and unfitneſs in actions.

*Dech.* But the wiſdom of God determined his will; for ſomething there muſt have been, to determine it; or elſe it acted by mere accident and chance. God muſt have had ſome reaſon and deſign in making things as they are.

*Shep.* Let us not, when we ſpeak of God, preſume to ſay, this attribute is prior in its operation to, and determines that: to talk after this manner, is to talk like vain and ignorant men. We only know, that the works of God are wiſe and good; but to aſſert, with aſſurance, that he made them by an eternal plan and archetype, or that one power in God dictated what another executed, is to ſpeak preſumptuouſly, if not abſurdly. God raiſed the whole ſpiritual and material world out of nothing; what plan could there have been for the creating of ſomething out of nothing, or for the giving being to matter by a ſingle act of the Divine will? Who can explain this inconceivable myſtery, or tell us how ſpirit could produce matter? If God made every thing as he pleaſed, and fitted the ſeveral conſtituent parts of each ſyſtem to one another, ſo as to render the whole of his works both beautiful and good; and if the various ſpecies of things, with all their qualities and relations, were dictated to him by no neceſſities of the things themſelves, nor of fate, nor of his own nature; it will follow, that wiſdom and choice preſided over all the works of creation, and that God gave this ſort of being, and manner of being, to one thing, and that ſort to another, when he could, inſtead of that, have left the whole preſent

ſent ſyſtem of created being uncreated, and raiſed another, wholly different, out of nothing; or for ever abſtained, if he pleaſed, from the work of creation. But having once, by his free-will and choice, made all things, and fitted them wiſely to one another; a natural law did neceſſarily reſult from the nature and fitneſs of things; and it became the duty of every intelligent being, as ſoon as it knew the Creator and Governor of the world, and the fitneſs of things, to regulate its actions according to that law. By this it appears, that the law reſulting from the fitneſſes of things, and thoſe, again, from the free-will of God, and at a certain time; the law itſelf could not have been eternal, but muſt have commenced with the birth of thoſe things to which it is a law. It is alſo plain, from the ſame principles, that this law, which ſprung intirely from the free-will and choice of God, could not have bound the actions of God himſelf, nor been indiſpenſable. While things remain as they are, all intelligent creatures are obliged to act according to the known fitneſſes of things, unleſs when God requires the contrary; in which caſe, the ſuperior fitneſs of obeying him ſuperſedes the inferior fitneſſes of actions to other things. Now although God chuſes to govern the world by the nature impreſſed on it, and the law ariſing from thence; yet, as that law is no law to him, but only to his creatures, he may diſpenſe with it, when he pleaſes.

*Dech.* Will he ever diſpenſe with this law, but for good and weighty reaſons?

*Shep.* Never.

*Dech.* The law of reaſon, then, is a law to him; for ſtill he acts by reaſon, and that reaſon can ariſe from nothing elſe than the fitneſſes of the things, and the good of the whole ſyſtem of things; which, in ſome caſes, may require a ſuſpenſion of the law, in reſpect to lower and narrower fitneſſes.

*Shep.* But as he created all things, ſo he alſo created the reaſons of things; and can not only annihilate or change the things, but alſo diſpenſe with, or change, the reaſons of things. It is not by the ſuperior virtue of one clauſe in the law of nature, that he can diſpenſe with

with another of inferior expediency and obligation, but by his ſuperiority over all things, and all law; by which he hath an unlimited and uncontroulable right to diſpenſe with the whole law.

*Dech.* This repreſents him as an arbitrary being; and if this way of thinking about God is admitted, *we cannot tell how often he may change his law upon us: for, if he can diſpenſe with the reaſons of things, there is nothing left to render his proceeding ſteady, uniform, and good; and then what a miſerable condition muſt the world be in! ſince an arbitrary will might change every moment* (a). No, Mr. *Shepherd*, God cannot act againſt the reaſon and nature of things, in any caſe.

*Shep.* Say, rather, he will not; for God is both naturally and morally free; and, in acting by reaſon, chuſes to do ſo; being thereunto compelled by no neceſſity nor obligation, but ſuch as he is, at any time, pleaſed to enter into with his creatures: and his having an uncontroulable right to do whatſoever he pleaſes, is by no means an argument, that he will be either fickle or tyrannical. Men, indeed, are not to be truſted with unlimited freedom and power, becauſe men are weak and wicked: but a man is not to *imagine that God is ſuch an one as himſelf.* He is invariably good and wiſe, and always does that which is beſt; not becauſe he is obliged, by any law, to do it, or accountable to any other being for what he does; but becauſe he is good, and always freely chuſes to do that which is good. Any other idea of his goodneſs would repreſent it as involuntary, and ſubject his will to ſome ſuperior power; whereas there is nothing above the will of God, nothing to govern that will, which is a law to all things. *Shafteſbury* and *Tindal* often inſiſt, that if the will of God were not bounded by the law of nature, he might, without reaſon, change his will, on all occaſions: but in this there is not the leaſt ſhadow of a conſequence, nor do they even attempt to aſſign the reaſon for ſaying ſo; a will may be ſteady that is uncontrouled, and even the wills of men are not controuled by laws for any other reaſon, but becauſe they are variable, or ill-diſpoſed. All men allow, that

(a) Chr. as old as the creation.

that laws are given for the bad, and not for the good; and as there is no man perfectly good, ſo there is no man left intirely to himſelf, and without ſome law or other: but as God is perfectly good, ſo he is alſo perfectly free, and bounded in his actions by no laws at all.

*Dech.* Does a law take away freedom from him who is obliged to obey it?

*Shep.* He is ſtill at liberty to obey or diſobey, but cannot do the latter without forfeiting the rewards, and incurring the penalties, annexed to the law, which renders him ſubject, and, conſequently, not perfectly free. Beſides, he is not perfectly free, who hath any ſuperior; and all laws are impoſed by ſome ſuperior, on ſome one or more inferiors; and therefore God can be ſubject to no law, becauſe he hath no ſuperior. There is not one ingredient in a law that does not prove, to demonſtration, the impoſſibility of any law to bind the actions of God. Every law is dictated by ſome higher power to him or them who are to obey it; but there is no higher power to dictate to Almighty God. Every law is given to teach thoſe, who are obliged to obſerve it, how they are to act; but God is infinitely wiſe, and cannot be taught any thing. Every law hath a penalty or reward, or both, annexed to it, which are to be conferred or inflicted on thoſe to whom it is given; but God can neither be rewarded, nor puniſhed. Every law renders thoſe, who are ſubject to it, accountable to ſome ſuperior; but God is accountable to none, nor can he be judged by any. Every law neceſſarily ſuppoſes thoſe, on whom it is laid, to be fallible and peccable; but God is infallible, impeccable, and abſolutely perfect. Thus, Sir, it is manifeſt, beyond all contradiction or queſtion, that the actions of God are bounded by no law: yet all his creatures are perfectly ſafe, and may, if they pleaſe, be happy in his hands; for he is infinitely wiſe and good; and, having it in his power to do what he pleaſes, will do only that which is good.

*Dech.* His wiſdom and goodneſs, then, are laws to him; and that is all I ever inſiſted on, though in other words.

*Shep.*

*Shep.* Say, rather, his wiſdom and goodneſs are to him, what his laws are to us.

*Dech.* When I ſay that reaſon, or wiſdom and goodneſs, are laws to God; I do not mean, that they are laws, in the ſtrict and immediate ſenſe of the word, as uſed among men.

*Shep.* Yet you Deiſts, and many others, without ever defining your meaning for the word, uſe it as familiarily, when ſpeaking of God's actions, as you do when you ſpeak of your own, or thoſe of other men; by which you bring yourſelves, and others, to talk of God as a limited being, as ſubject either to ſome eternal ſuperior, or to himſelf; as bound, obliged, and governed; which are moſt derogatory expreſſions, and highly abſurd in themſelves, as well as dangerous in their conſequences, and repugnant to truth and religion. Great errors, in all ſorts of knowlege, ariſe from the abuſe of words; and, among all the miſapplications of words, none hath been more general than that of the word *law:* it hath been raiſed infinitely above all ſenſe and ſignification by ſome, in order to apply it to God; and by others impiouſly applied to him in its own proper and natural ſenſe. It hath been alſo ſunk, although not quite ſo far, beneath its rational or poſſible import, by a metaphorical application to the qualities of matter, and the cauſes of mere phyſical *phænomena.* Attraction, or gravitation, is called a *law*; and the properties of motion, with the mechanical powers, are all enacted into *laws*, by natural philoſophers. The heavenly bodies are all carried about by due courſe of *law*; the ebbing and flowing of the tides, and even the moſt irregular motions of the winds, are perfectly *legal:* no wonder, when ſuch liberties as theſe are taken with the word, if the more regular dictates of human nature are by many, and its moſt vicious propenſities by ſome, called laws, before any authority appears to eſtabliſh and enforce them as ſuch. To conclude, the reaſon of man, when duly informed, can be a law only to man; and to ſay that reaſon, of any ſort, can be, in any ſenſe or propriety, a law to God, who lays his laws on us, and not on himſelf, ſeems to me to be nonſenſe, if not blaſphemy: and, in my opinion,

opinion, this way of expreſſing ourſelves ought to be abſtained from, inaſmuch as it leads us into unfathomable depths and difficulties, which may be avoided by more guarded expreſſions, that will ſerve all our purpoſes as well; ſuch as, that God, being infinitely wiſe, good, and juſt, will always *chuſe* to act right, without being bound ſo to do by any law. To ſay that this law, laid on man, is eternal, is the ſame as to ſay, that human nature, to which alone it can be a law, is eternal. And to ſay that God himſelf cannot diſpenſe with it, is to ſay, God is ſubject to the laws he hath impoſed on his creatures, and deſtitute of that prerogative which all earthly legiſlators claim to themſelves.

THE other objection, which, I think, bears very hard upon the Deiſtical creed, is this: If we ſuppoſe the law of nature, as ſet forth in that creed, and in the writings of all our Deiſts, to be the only rule of action given us by Almighty God, and the only law by which we are hereafter to be judged; if we likewiſe ſuppoſe this law is ſo fully promulgated to every man, by his own ſentiments and reaſon, as to leave him without excuſe for any ignorance of his duty, into which he may happen to fall, and enforced, proportionably to its great and important ends, by future rewards and puniſhments, ſufficiently inducing or alarming; the condition of mankind muſt be moſt forlorn and frightful.

*Dech.* Pray, Sir, how ſo?

*Shep.* Don't you ſay the law of nature is ſufficiently made known to all men?

*Dech.* I ſay, every man hath ſufficient means of knowing, by the light of nature, what is his duty, on all occaſions *(a)*.

*Shep.* You ſay this law is perfect, and neither needs nor admits of any alteration, addition, or diminution.

*Dech.* I do.

*Shep.* Are all men to be judged by this law, whenſoever God ſhall pleaſe to call them to an account?

*Dech.* They are.

*Shep.*

(a) Chriſt. old as Creation, chap. 1. and elſewhere.

*Shep.* If any man ſhall be found, on tryal before the judgment-ſeat of God, to have been a ſtrict obſerver of this law, he will, I ſuppoſe, be acquitted, and remain, for ever afterwards, in the favour of God.

*Dech.* He will.

*Shep.* But if he ſhall be found to have been a tranſgreſſor of this law, will he not be condemned?

*Dech.* So I think.

*Shep.* Have not all men tranſgreſſed this law?

*Dech.* They have.

*Shep.* All men, therefore, ſhall be condemned.

*Dech.* As no man can live up to the ſtrictneſs of a perfect law, God, who is infinitely merciful, will not exact a perfect obedience. The law or rule of action muſt be perfect; but it does not follow from thence, that a perfect obedience ſhall be required, with rigour, from frail man, by a gracious God.

*Shep.* You ſuppoſe, then, that God will forgive the breaches of this law.

*Dech.* Look you, Sir, I do not ſuppoſe he will forgive a total or enormous violation of it.

*Shep.* That is, if a man hath not violated every ſingle article of it, he will be forgiven.

*Dech.* Neither is that what I mean; but if a man hath not been guilty of the moſt atrocious breaches, and hath done more good than evil in the whole of his life, taken together; God will reward him according to his overplus of good.

*Shep.* It ſeems, then, man can merit in the ſight of God, or deſerve ſomewhat of God.

*Dech.* I think he may; and Chriſtians think ſo too, or they would not always call eternal happineſs a reward.

*Shep.* The Papiſts, indeed, ſay a man may, in ſome ſenſe, merit of God; but the Scriptures ſay the contrary, and bid us look upon ourſelves, when we have done our beſt, as *unprofitable ſervants.* Thoſe eternal joys, therefore, which are propoſed in Scripture as an encouragement to virtue, are, in that ſenſe, called rewards; not that our beſt actions can deſerve them, but becauſe the infinite goodneſs of God is pleaſed freely to beſtow

beſtow them on us for Chriſt's ſake, if we do our utmoſt to live according to the Chriſtian covenant. Chriſt imputes his merit to us, and it is on the ſtrength of that, and not of our own merit, that we are ſaid to be rewarded. But the Deiſts, who make virtue its own ſufficient reward, are fully paid, perhaps over-paid, for all the good they do, in this life: however, I cannot but tremble for the fate of man, when I conſider, that his ſins, I mean the ſins of the beſt man, appear ſo plainly to exceed his good actions; when I conſider likewiſe, that man, having received all he hath, and particularly his power of doing good, from God, owes him the utmoſt good he can do; and therefore, in his beſt actions, does but pay a ſmall part of his debt, not place an obligation on God; and in his bad actions, which are in your opinion committed wilfully, and againſt the well-known law of God, gives great and grievous cauſe of offence to his juſt Maker and Judge. *Lucretius* had good reaſon to object to the Pagan, that is, as you and Lord *Herbert* call it, the natural theology, that it afforded no hope of forgiveneſs after ſinning.

——— *At mens ſibi conſcia facti,*
*Præmetuens adhibet ſtimulos, terretque flagellis;*
*Nec videt interea, qui terminus eſſe malorum*
*Poſſit, nec qui ſit pœnarum denique finis;*
*Atque eadem metuit magis hæc ne in morte graveſcant.*

*Dech.* Fear not. Man is in the hands of a merciful God, and may ſafely truſt to his goodneſs.

*Shep.* It is a moſt pleaſing thought. But, leſt man ſhould preſume on this goodneſs, and be thereby encouraged to become evil himſelf, it is, I ſhould think, highly neceſſary he ſhould conſider God, not only as merciful, but as juſt alſo, and capable of inflicting puniſhments, as well as diſpenſing rewards. If the ſubjects know they are to be forgiven, the penalties of the law are of no effect. But if, in any caſe, the delinquent cannot be both pardoned and puniſhed, or if it ſhould ſeem doubtful, whether a juſt and merciful God ſhould exact juſtice, or confer mercy, I muſt own I think it moſt

moſt conſiſtent with the wiſdom, nay, with the goodneſs of God, that juſtice ſhould be preferred, becauſe, on the due diſtribution of juſtice, the order and happineſs of the whole depend; whereas the good of individuals only can reſult from the pardon of individuals. Juſtice, timely executed on ſome, may prevent the ſins of many; but mercy, ſhewn publicly to all, can hardly fail of encouraging all to tranſgreſs, ſhould they be tempted to it.

*Dech.* They muſt take care therefore not to proceed to ſuch enormity and hardneſs, as mercy, bounded by juſtice, cannot forgive.

*Shep.* There are then certain lengths, to which they may carry their tranſgreſſions, with hopes of impunity.

*Dech.* There certainly are ſins which a man may be forgiven; and others, for which he will be puniſhed. There are greater and leſſer ſins.

*Shep.* Sins, conſidered in themſelves, and their effects, are of different degrees; however, if they be conſidered as done againſt the authority of God, they muſt deſerve his animadverſion. God, if we believe the Deiſts, is neither the better nor the worſe for what we do, is infinitely happy without our obedience, and in ſpite of our vices; and is no way affected by our actions (*a*). It muſt be therefore your opinion, that all our actions are equal in the ſight of God, that is, equally inſignificant, and incapable of pleaſing or offending him, which totally deſtroys all practical religion.

*Dech.* This opinion, even as you miſrepreſent it, is more to his honour, than that principle of Chriſtians, which repreſents all our ſins as highly and equally offenſive to him. He, you know, who tranſgreſſes one commandment, is by your religion ſaid to be guilty of the whole law.

*Shep.* But a man may tranſgreſs the whole law more heinouſly in one inſtance, than in another. In any inſtance, however, he who tranſgreſſes the law, ſins againſt infinite Majeſty, and is very guilty. Now this is by far a more wholſome poſition, than that God is utterly unconcerned about our actions. Perhaps a man is not diſpoſed

(*a*) Chriſt. old as Creation, chap. 5.

poſed from within, nor tempted from without, to commit murder; but, however, is covetous, and defrauds his neighbour. This man ſhews no reſpect for the majeſty of God, and the authority of his law; and were he as ſtrongly tempted to commit murder, I cannot ſee what there is to reſtrain him. He certainly is lawleſs, and does all the miſchief he hath an inclination to; which to God, who ſees his heart, renders him as guilty, as if he had actually broken all his other commandments.

*Dech.* You may refine upon this matter as you pleaſe; but nothing can be more manifeſt, than that ſome ſins, being more prejudicial to mankind than others, and done in violation of ſtronger and higher reluctances, planted in our nature by God, are therefore in his ſight more offenſive.

*Shep.* And what will follow, but that the greater ſhall be puniſhed with more ſeverity, and the ſmaller with leſs? In the laws of God, as well as man, there are diſferent degrees of puniſhment; yet the ſmalleſt and mildeſt is ſtill a puniſhment. I would be glad to know, however, what degrees of vice they are, into which a man may give with impunity, and where he ought to ſtop; this being the only point of importance to accountable and puniſhable creatures, inaſmuch as the venial degrees of ſin, in reſpect to puniſhment, are as no ſins at all. Does the light of nature, with the clearneſs of all its other dictates, inform us of this? Does the law itſelf tell us what part of it we may ſafely tranſgreſs, that is, what part of it is uſeleſs and inſignificant?

*Dech.* That would be a ſtrange abſurdity in a perfect law. If we tranſgreſs, Sir, we are then at the mercy of God, to which we are to ſet no bounds.

*Shep.* Not, unleſs he hath told us what bounds he intends to ſet to his own mercy; and I only inquired whether this had been done thro' the light of nature, or not. Since I find it is not, and that we have by that light no hope of mercy, if we tranſgreſs the law, but ſuch as is defeated by an utter ignorance, whether we are within the pardonable degree of ſin or not; as I alſo find, that all we have to expect from a perfect obedience to the law of nature is a bare acquittal; be ſo good as to tell us, on what

dictate of nature you found your expectation of a future reward. *Tindal*, I know, gives it as his dictate, that we can by no means merit in the ſight of God (*a*).

*Dech.* Reaſon tells us, God is infinitely bountiful; and it is on that divine attribute we found our hopes of happineſs.

*Shep.* If a man makes a preſent of a conſiderable ſum to one he never received any ſervice from, can that be called a reward?

*Dech.* No.

*Shep.* The future happineſs you expect, then, cannot be in the nature of a reward. God is not obliged by your law to make you eternally happy, altho' you ſhould conform yourſelves never ſo ſtrictly to it; or if he is, let us hear what aſſurance you have from nature of this obligation lying upon God.

*Dech.* We know, that a good being is pleaſing in his ſight; and that whoſoever is ſo, muſt be happy.

*Shep.* Then our goodneſs gives him pleaſure, contrary to what you all maintain concerning the inſignificance of our actions in the ſight of God. Your law, in ſhort, ſtrips you of all pretenſions; and as you all tranſgreſs it, renders you liable, for ought I can ſee, to all the effects of God's diſpleaſure, be thoſe what they will. I cannot find in the light of nature, as it ſhines from *Shafteſbury*, *Tindal*, or you, the leaſt glimmering proſpect of reconciliation with God.

*Dech.* Tell me, Doctor, if a man ſhould offend you, and, repenting of what he had done, ſhould acknowlege his fault, and aſk pardon; would you not forgive him?

*Shep.* Yes, or I ſhould act againſt the expreſs commandment of Chriſt.

*Dech.* Very well; and do you not believe Chriſt to be God?

*Shep.* I do.

*Dech.* Do you believe God would command you, who are a frail paſſionate creature, as poor *Cunningham*, the Devil's emiſſary, can witneſs, to do that which he himſelf, who is infinitely patient and forgiving, would not do?

*Shep.*

(*a*) Ibidem.

*Shep.* I believe, were it poſſible for him to be in my place, he would do what he hath commanded me to do.

*Dech.* Why, do you really think his place makes forgiveneſs leſs proper than yours does?

*Shep.* In many caſes it certainly does. I commit many offences againſt him, and my neighbour; and cannot reaſonably hope to be forgiven myſelf, if I do not forgive others. But he is without ſin; and beſides, as he is ſupreme Monarch of the whole univerſe, it belongs to him to ſee juſtice done, *to render to every man according to his deeds*, in order to ſupport the dignity of his laws, on which the happineſs of all the free and intelligent creation depends; and which if any one might tranſgreſs with impunity, on merely repenting, I cannot ſee how his kingdom, at leaſt this earthly province of it, could be preſerved. Every one will repent ſome time or other, if he thinks he is to be pardoned, and thereby exempted from intolerable puniſhments; by which means it will come to paſs, that no one ſhall ſuffer, and ſo the penal laws of God will be in vain, altho' the world ſhall be filled with wickedneſs, and by no temptation ſo much, as by this very expectation of impunity on repentance deferred as long as the delinquent pleaſes.

*Dech.* That is as much as to ſay, there is no room for pardon, and conſequently no encouragement to repentance; and that God, tho' he hath ordered every one to forgive, will himſelf never forgive any one. This I think is ſhocking.

*Shep.* So it is indeed; and I never ſaid any thing like it. At preſent I want to know whether the law of nature promiſes pardon for ſin; whether for all ſins, or only for ſome; and, if ſome only, what thoſe ſins are, and whether abſolutely, or on certain conditions; and, if the latter, what thoſe conditions are. Theſe, if I be not miſtaken, are points well worth inquiring after.

*Dech.* Why then I tell you, God will pardon no ſins, great nor ſmall, if not repented of; becauſe while a man perſeveres in ſin, he is incapable of receiving the favours of God. On the other hand, God will forgive all ſins, truly repented of, becauſe the true penitent is an object of his pity. Can any thing be more evident, than that, if doing evil is the only foundation of God's diſplea-

ſure; ceaſing to do evil, and doing the contrary, muſt take away God's diſpleaſure?

*Shep.* The true penitent, I believe, is an object of God's mercy; but, as one who hath offended, and is debtor to the law of God, he is ſtill an object of his juſtice too; and to prevent the law, on which the general good depends, from falling into contempt, he muſt be puniſhed. Beſides, God's aſſiſtance is neceſſary to a true repentance. Before a ſinner can begin to be the object of God's favour, he muſt ceaſe to be what he was before, and commence a new man. Now no man can make a man. None but the Creator can make a new man, or a new creature. There is a degree of ſtrength neceſſary to a true repentance, ſuch as no man is maſter of. But as I ſaid a little while ago, that the caſe of God and any particular Chriſtian was, in reſpect to forgiveneſs, widely different; ſo you have this moment acknowleged it, and made it wider than I ever took it to be.

*Deeh.* Have I, Sir?

*Shep.* Did you not juſt now ſay, that God will pardon no ſins, but ſuch as are truly repented of? And yet you have been very lately arguing with me upon a ſuppoſition, that God requires it of man, that he ſhould forgive all ſorts of ſins, without any limitation.

*Deeh.* You Chriſtians ſay he does, and I only reaſoned with you on your profeſſed principles.

*Shep.* But pray what is your own way of thinking in this matter? Doth the law of nature bid us forgive thoſe, who make no ſubmiſſion nor reparation?

*Deeh.* I believe it does.

*Shep.* Believe! Are you not clear in a point of ſuch moment, which the converſation and dealing of almoſt every day make it neceſſary for us to underſtand?

*Deeh.* Upon ſecond thoughts, it certainly does.

*Temp.* Beyond all queſtion; or elſe the Chriſtian religion, which bids us love thoſe who hate us, and pray for thoſe who perſecute us, would be a religion of vaſtly more tenderneſs, than that of nature; and Chriſtian charity would be highly preferable to philoſophical benevolence.

*Deeh.* I hope nobody thinks it was to avoid that preference, that I ſaid the law of nature obliges us to forgive

give our enemies, without acknowlegement or reparation of the injuries they have done us.

*Shep.* We are bound to believe, Sir, you have diſcovered this uſeful truth on the ſpot. Were it not ſo, or had you known it before, you could not have heſitated a moment for an anſwer. But nature is ſometimes like a flint, and will not emit its light without a little force. But if the law of nature bids us forgive unrepented offences; and if that law be not only the voice of God ſpeaking in us, but the very law that binds the actions of God himſelf; ſurely then God will forgive us all our offences againſt him without repentance.

*Temp.* Upon my word, Mr. *Dechaine*, the Parſon hath fairly thrown your own principles and arguments back upon yourſelf.

*Dech.* I do not ſee any thing in this piece of ſophiſtry that affects the law of nature. As none of our offences can reach or injure God, ſo, were he to conſider himſelf only, he would forgive all the breaches of his laws; but, as he is the conſervator of ſociety, of juſtice, and good order, according to your own doctrine, and according to that of Dr. *Tindal* in his third chapter, he will not forgive an offender, till he is reformed, and become fit for the ſociety of rational and good beings.

*Shep.* Let me underſtand you. If an offence ſhould be committed againſt God alone, does it for that reaſon contain nothing of immoral or criminal in it?

*Dech.* By no means, or it could not be properly ſaid to be forgiven; but as it could not provoke God to anger, nor any way diſhonour or injure him, we may be ſure he would forgive it.

*Shep.* If the offender ſhould perſevere for ever in blaſpheming and hating God, and, for ſuppoſition's ſake, ſhould carry well enough towards mankind; would God paſs by all, ſuffer him to be for ever happy in Heaven, and join his blaſphemies with the concert of hymns, poured out by the bleſſed ſpirits to their benefactor?

*Dech.* Your queſtions are ſometimes very ſhocking.

*Shep.* Well, let us quit this perplexing topic. I inſiſt, however, that altho' God ſhould never puniſh on his

own account, yet if he does it for the ſake of the general good, and merely as the conſervator of juſtice and order, it amounts to the ſame thing exactly, as to the point in hand; and I am ſtill at a loſs to conceive, how mere repentance, which at beſt can only render us the objects of pity, but make no ſort of amends for the evil we have committed, ſhould hinder us from being ſtill the objects of juſtice notwithſtanding.

*Dech.* Can the ſame man be both an object of mercy and juſtice at the ſame time?

*Shep.* O moſt eaſily, Sir. A judge often thinks the caſe of a criminal, whom he pities, highly deſerving of puniſhment.

*Dech.* But a judge acts for another, and muſt puniſh; whereas God acts for himſelf, and may pardon.

*Shep.* Surely you forget. God, as the Judge and Governor of the world, acts for the good of all his ſubjects; and altho' *his mercy is over all his works*, yet his juſtice alſo preſides as extenſively over his whole univerſal empire. God can, and would, always forgive, were it not that his wiſdom and juſtice, taking place, as well as his mercy, make the puniſhment of particulars conducive to the general good. Any inferior judge, tho' he pities the criminal, he in juſtice is obliged to condemn, would, in moſt caſes, condemn him, were he to act for himſelf; becauſe, were he to make the contrary the rule of his practice, he would, as far as his juriſdiction extended, totally deſtroy the effect of law, and ruin the community, were he ſupreme.

*Dech.* Well; but reaſon tells me, that God, who is infinitely gracious, will accept of repentance as an atonement, and not deſtroy his creature, after he is reformed, and diſpoſed to do good.

*Shep.* Thoſe are very arbitrary aſſertions; and my copy of the law of nature hath a various reading here, that makes me doubt of the certainty and clearneſs of yours, which, I am afraid, you at leaſt take the liberty of a commentator with. Mere repentance can make no ſatisfaction to juſtice for injuries and offences paſt; it can only put a man in the way of his duty for the time to come, which he owes to God, and which, therefore, can clear no ſcores for him. As to the reformation of a tranſgreſſor,

tranſgreſſor, together with his diſpoſition to lead a new life for the time to come, it may be rendered very precarious by the ſuppoſed eaſineſs of obtaining pardon. Nay, it cannot be effected without the grace of God, which the light of nature gives no hope of, and which all light-of-nature men make a jeſt of: and, as the grace of God is the free gift of God, man can neither offer up it, nor its fruits, as an atonement for his ſins. Man, Sir, is frail, and, in hopes of being pardoned again, may again tranſgreſs, unleſs his reaſon tells him he cannot be forgiven a ſecond or a third offence. Pray, what does reaſon ſay in that caſe?

*Dech.* It gives him hopes of forgiveneſs, if he ſins and repents ten thouſand times.

*Shep.* Nay, that he will ſin ſo often, I will venture to aſſure him, unleſs he dies very young. But, whether he will repent ſo often, or ever ſincerely and finally, or not, ere the terrors of death are ſet before him, is a great queſtion, having from nature no ſufficient incitements to ſo irkſome a duty. Our Deiſts have no-where proved, or, as far as I have read, attempted to prove, from the light of nature, that the mercy of God can take place upon a penitent offender, while his juſtice ſtands neuter, or lies dormant, and ſuffers the wrongs done to his ſubjects to go unpuniſhed, to the great encouragement of wickedneſs. Altho' he, who murders a man, repents, and, for the time to come, carefully avoids the leaſt approach to ſuch an action; yet, in his latter behaviour, he only does what it was always his duty to do, and no more; but makes no atonement to his poor neighbour, whom he hath deprived of life; nor to the community, from which he hath cut away a member; nor to God, whoſe creature and image he hath defaced. The Deiſts can never ſhew, on their principles, that the murderer, or any other criminal, can make the leaſt atonement or reparation for either the offences he commits againſt God, or the wrongs he does to man, in caſes where reſtitution is out of the queſtion. They ſay the obſervation of the natural law alone can render men acceptable in the ſight of God; and propoſe it as the only rule by which they are to act, and, conſequently, to be judged. It is by this that, according to the

deiſtical hypotheſis, all men muſt ſtand iſſue before Almighty God, and be acquitted for the obſervation, or condemned for the tranſgreſſion, of it. Now I muſt appeal to experience, and to the heart and conſcience of every man, whether he does not live in the daily tranſgreſſion, be it in higher or lower inſtances, of thoſe laws, which he believes God requires the obſervation of at his hands; and whether, after the moſt ſincere repentance, and the moſt thorough reformation he can make of his life and conduct, he finds not enough of evil diſpoſitions and lapſes to lament in himſelf, and put him in mind, that he is one of thoſe debtors, who, having nothing to pay in towards former accounts, is ſtill adding to, and inflaming, the debt. Thus, I think, it appears pretty plainly, that, if all men have ſufficient means of knowing their duty, as you inſiſt they have; and if every man tranſgreſſes the rules of his duty, as his conſcience cannot but inform him he does; the whole race of mankind are loſt for ever.

*Temp.* You, Mr. *Dechaine*, ſeem to forget, that God is juſt; and you, Mr. *Shepherd*, that he is merciful.

*Dech.* I inſiſt, that, as God is merciful, he will forgive.

*Shep.* And I inſiſt, that, as he is juſt, he will puniſh.

*Temp.* Pray, Mr. *Dechaine*, are you able, upon the deiſtical ſcheme, to rid yourſelf of this difficulty?

*Dech.* I ſee no difficulty in it at all. God gives us laws only for our good, and will never ſuffer thoſe laws to become a ſnare to us, and the occaſion of our eternal miſery. Beſides, he is infinitely compaſſionate and indulgent to the frailties of his creatures; and, as they will not always continue to offend, ſo neither will he always perſevere in puniſhing.

*Temp.* God, it is true, gives us laws only for our good; but thoſe laws cannot be for our good, if he does not puniſh us for the violation of them, and that in a degree equal to the end and purpoſe of thoſe laws, that is, I muſt own, in a very high degree of ſeverity.

*Dech.* Can it be for our good to be puniſhed ſo ſeverely?

*Temp.* It is certainly for the good of men in general, and of all intelligent beings, that the laws of God, on which all order and happineſs neceſſarily depend, ſhould be duly enforced; and this they can never be, at leaſt among

among men, if the puniſhment, annexed to the tranſgreſſion of them, is inadequate to the end, or may be evaded by repeated repentances, after repeated ſins; which is but trifling with the laws, and the majeſty of their author. You own yourſelf, he who tranſgreſſes the law of nature is without excuſe, ſince that law is ſufficiently made known to him, and placed even within his own heart. This makes wilful offenders of us all, and juſtifies our judge in laying on us all thoſe ſeverities, whatever they are, which he hath annexed to the tranſgreſſion of his law, and made fully known to us, as a main and neceſſary enforcement of that law. Whether ſinful men will ever ceaſe to ſin, if they do not ſtand in awe of ſuch ſeverities, or whether they will ever give up their ſinful, but long-indulged delights, if they be not encouraged ſo to do by better-grounded hopes of pardon, than the mere light of nature can give them, I much queſtion. In this life I am confident they will not, and to repent in the next life may, for ought nature can tell us, be too late. Pray, Mr. *Shepherd*, can you ſolve the difficulty before us, upon Chriſtian principles?

*Shep.* Does not the difficulty conſiſt in this, that infinite mercy will forgive all ſorts of ſins, and infinite juſtice will ſuffer no ſin to go unpuniſhed?

*Temp.* It does.

*Shep.* If man ſuffers the full puniſhment of the law, juſtice only operates, and mercy does not interpoſe. If man is exempted from the puniſhment of the law, then mercy only is conſulted with, and juſtice is laid aſide. But, on the Chriſtian ſcheme, juſtice is ſatisfied, by the death of Chriſt, and ſo mercy takes place. The ſins of all men are fully puniſhed in his ſufferings, the curſe of the law is taken off, and the ſting of death is broken.

*Dech.* The ſufferings of one cannot atone for the ſins of another, nor would juſtice puniſh the innocent for the guilty.

*Shep.* God hath a right to accept of this as an atonement, and juſtice did not lay the puniſhment of our ſins on Chriſt, till Chriſt voluntarily undertook to endure the puniſhment due by the law to our tranſgreſſions.

*Dech.* As men cannot be made miſerable by the ſins of other men, ſo neither can one man be made happy by the virtue and ſufferings of another. To ſay that they

may, is to ſpeak againſt reaſon, and the common notions of juſtice. Now a religion, the fundamental article of which contradicts the common ſenſe of mankind, can never be received by mankind, as the dictates of Almighty God, till mankind have loſt their ſenſes.

*Shep.* That, I find, may be contrary to common ſenſe, which is confirmed by univerſal experience. The ſon every-where ſuffers for the ſins of his father, in hereditary poverty and ſickneſs. To deny the fact, is to deprive yourſelf of a right to be diſputed with; and to ſay it is inconſiſtent with the juſtice of God, is to run into Atheiſm or Blaſphemy. Eſtates are often, and juſtly, ſettled on the poſterity of a perſon, who died in the ſervice of his country, and they enjoy the benefit of their patent, without any merit of their own, while unattainted of high treaſon, merely for the merit of their anceſtor. This legal imputation of merit, or application of the fruits ariſing from the merit of another, is never deemed unjuſt among men. Even when the reward is pecuniary, and ariſes out of the public funds, thoſe who are taxed for theſe funds, never grudge the bounty, paid out of their own pockets, to the deſcendents of ſuch as have ſacrificed their lives for the good of the community. In this chanel, eſtates, annuities, and honours, deſcend to many generations; and I queſtion much, whether any other tenure gives, in the eye of reaſon, ſo equitable a title. Thus, Sir, both naturally, and politically, the entail of merit and demerit goes down, from a good or bad man, to his poſterity, by a neceſſity of nature, or a conſtitution of ſtate, independent of the will, and previous to the behaviour, of him who inherits. Now, Sir, it will be impoſſible for you to ſhew, that God may not do that by grace, which he hath done by nature, and which the head of every community hath a right to do by legal and civil appointment.

*Dech.* The imputation of merit, not one's own, does by no means furniſh an argument for the pardon of crimes, on account of another's merit; yet this is the point at which your inſtance ought to have been levelled.

*Shep.* I thank you for the hint. Is the ſon never juſtly pardoned even the crime of high treaſon, on account of his father's ſervices, and fidelity? Can any thing be more con-

conſiſtent with juſtice, than a pardon thus obtained, provided ſufficient ſecurity can be produced for the future loyalty of the ſon?

*Temp.* There is, I ſee, a beautiful conformity between the government of God's kingdom, and that of human ſocieties.

*Shep.* They ought always to be the ſame, ſo far as the diverſity of circumſtances, and the ſubordination of human governors, to the abſolute prerogative of the univerſal governor, will permit: for we muſt ſtill remember, that God is veſted with an higher plenitude of power to preſcribe terms, on which imputed and vicarious merits may be accepted, than an earthly legiſlature, or king.

*Cunn.* I cannot ſee how the laying on one perſon the puniſhment due to the ſins of another, can be reconciled with what God tells us by the mouth of *Ezekiel*; that *the father ſhall not ſuffer for the iniquity of the ſon, nor the ſon for the iniquity of the father; but that the ſoul that ſinneth, it ſhall die.*

*Shep.* That paſſage hath no reference to the caſe in queſtion. The *Iſraelites* complained, that they had been puniſhed for the ſins of their forefathers; and nothing can be plainer, from a variety of paſſages, than that they had actually ſuffered ſeverely by means of the idolatry, and other ſins, of their anceſtors and kings, which brought on them an long train of calamities; ſuch as drought, famine, peſtilence, the ſword, and captivity. But God, in this paſſage, declares, that it ſhall be no longer ſo; and that, for the future, every man ſhall ſuffer only for ſins of his own committal. This, now, is only a particular diſpenſation, and contrary to another, that had continued till that time, and therefore cannot, but by implication, be applied to the ſuppoſed ſubſtitution of our Saviour's ſufferings, in the room of ours: nor can it, even by implication, ſhew, that this ſubſtitution is unjuſt: for, whereas the *Iſraelites* complained of the ſufferings before-mentioned, it appears, they did not conſent to them; but our Saviour, who had a right to chuſe either life or death, voluntarily ſubmitted to the death of the croſs, in order to take away ſin; he, of his own accord, became our ſurety; and, upon our non-payment of our

debt, paid it for us. He was an hoſtage for our performance of a covenant, and upon our tranſgreſſing the articles of that covenant; did, freely undergo the penalty, annexed thereunto; and, having made a full atonement for our breach of the former, made a new covenant between God and us, by his blood.

*Cunn.* Surely, if the penalty of the former covenant was eternal death, Chriſt did not undergo that penalty; for he ſuffered only a temporary death.

*Shep.* But if he ſuffered what, in the ſight of his Father, was equivalent, and all that he at firſt engaged to ſuffer; this muſt be ſufficient.

*Dech.* If Chriſt was a mere creature, he could make no equivalent attonement for us; and if he was God, he could make none, becauſe God can neither die, nor ſuffer.

*Shep.* But as his perſon conſiſted of both the Divine and human nature, the one rendered him capable of ſuffering, and the other gave ſufficient dignity to that ſuffering. The continual afflictions, the horrible agonies of mind and body, with the ſhameful and grievous death of a perſon conſiſting of God and man, was equal, in the ſight of an infinitely tender and affectionate Father, to all the eternal ſufferings which mankind were liable to for their ſins. It is impoſſible for us to conceive that exceſſive anguiſh, which could force the blood of our Saviour through his pores; and the ſtill greater torments that could compel him, when on the croſs, notwithſtanding the full aſſurance he had of his Father's eternal love for him, to cry out, *My God! my God! why haſt thou forſaken me?* It is manifeſt, from theſe inſtances, that his ſufferings were not like thoſe of other men; and that nothing, but the intimate union of the Divine nature with the human, could have upheld the latter under ſuch an infinite extremity of anguiſh. This muſt have been a more piteous and moving ſight to the eyes of an infinitely gracious and loving Father, than the eternal miſeries of man, guilty and rebellious man. There is another conſideration, by which the value of our Saviour's ſufferings ought to be eſtimated. As an indignity is always rated by the preſumption, and as the preſumption bears an exact proportion to the meanneſs of the perſon

inſulting, and to the greatneſs of the party inſulted; ſo, in like manner, all acts of condeſcenſion being eſtimated by the humility, and that, again, by the dignity, of the condeſcending perſon, and by the lowneſs and demerit of the party condeſcended to; it will follow, that the condeſcenſion of our Saviour, in taking our nature on him, and ſuffering therein, muſt have been an act of infinite condeſcenſion, if it is allowed, that the dignity of his perſon is infinite, not only in itſelf, but alſo in reſpect to the unworthineſs of thoſe for whom, and the cruelty of thoſe by whom, he ſuffered. His innocence and goodneſs, whereof the one is infinite, and the other perfect, conſtituting an eſſential part of his dignity, do particularly enhance the value of his mercy and condeſcenſion; eſpecially when, at the ſame time, our guilt is conſidered.

*Dech.* Nothing, in my opinion, can be more inconſiſtent with reaſon, and common ſenſe, than to imagine any atonement can be made for ſin by the ſufferings of an innocent repreſentative.

*Shep.* All nations of the world, then, have thought and acted, in this reſpect, againſt reaſon, and common ſenſe: for in all nations ſacrifices, and vicarious atonements, have been offered up to God; and the light of nature did not forbid the world to hope for pardon of their ſins, upon taking away the life of even a beaſt, with that view.

*Dech.* It was not reaſon, nor nature, I am ſure, that put mankind on this ſtrange expedient.

*Shep.* No; nor could mankind have ever ſo much as thought of ſuch an expedient, had it not been appointed by Almighty God, as a repreſentative of the great Sacrifice. But neither reaſon nor nature, Sir, made any objections to it, till mankind loſt ſight of the end for which vicarious ſacrifices were inſtituted; and then God, who himſelf appointed and ordained them, reproved them, as ſuperſtitious and inefficacious. Nay, the reaſon of mankind in general, and even of the wiſeſt men among the Heathens, was not ſo ſtrong as to aboliſh, or ſo much as diſcountenance, the uſe of ſacrifices, even after the rational end of their inſtitution ceaſed to be known. The practice

ctice went on, and it was believed, that the gods were appeaſed by the ſavoury ſteam of roaſted fleſh.

*Cunn.* But how does all this diſcourſe, about ſacrifices, and the natural light, ſhew that your faith does not aſcribe injuſtice to God, in putting an innocent perſon to death for the tranſgreſſions of the guilty?

*Shep.* Was Chriſt innocent?

*Cunn. He was without ſin.*

*Shep.* And was he put to death by the appointment and predetermination of God?

*Cunn.* The *Jews* put him to death.

*Shep.* Do not evade the queſtion. Was he not the *Lamb ſlain from the foundation of the world?* Was he not *ſo delivered by the determinate counſel and foreknowlege of God, that the* Jews, *having taken him, by wicked hands crucified and ſlew him?*

*Cunn.* And what then?

*Shep.* Nothing; but that you are to anſwer, as well as I, for ſaying that God predetermined the death of this only innocent perſon. It now lies equally on us both to look out for a reaſon ſufficient to juſtify God in ſending an innocent perſon into the world, and fore-ordaining his death.

*Cunn.* He ſuffered perſecution and death, that he might ſet us an example of reſignation and patience.

*Shep.* Was this all? Or is this enough? The prophets before him, and the apoſtles after him, did the like; but they had been guilty of ſin, and were liable to death, the wages of ſin: their example, therefore, in reſpect to reſignation only, may ſeem a more natural object of our imitation, than that of our Saviour; ſo that if to ſet us an example of reſignation was all our Saviour died for, this might have been done as effectually, and, upon your principles, more juſtly, by the death of one, whoſe natural infirmities brought him nearer to a reſemblance of ourſelves No, Mr. *Cunningham*; ſome higher view muſt be looked for in our Saviour's death, ſome end, which the death of no mere man, no ſinner, is qualified to anſwer; namely, that which the Scriptures ſo often mention, and ſo ſtrongly inſiſt on, the remiſſion of ſins. If you can conceive it juſt in God to conſent, that his moſt innocent and holy Son ſhould die the death of a male-

factor,

factor, merely to ſet us an example of patience; how can you call it unjuſt, when another, and yet a much greater and better, end is added; the diſappointment of diabolical envy and malice, the reſtoration of mankind to peace with God, and the healing that horrible breach which ſin had made in the moral world? If any thing can reflect on the juſtice of God for cauſing, or even ſuffering, his innocent Son to be put to death, it muſt be the want of a ſufficient end, or purpoſe. Now, in the name of wiſdom and juſtice, was the mere ſetting an example of patience a ſufficient end? Patience is but one, in the circle of virtues, which it is our duty to cultivate, and which, after all the influence of our Saviour's example, we may fail to exerciſe as we ought. And did the Son of God ſuffer the death of a guilty ſlave, merely to ſupply us with a precarious help towards the cultivation of one virtue, which altho' we ſhould cultivate to the utmoſt, it would neither make us good, nor happy, if the other virtues ſhould be wanting? Surely the ſcheme of Divine wiſdom looked much farther than this; and ſurely every Chriſtian muſt renounce the word of God, or elſe believe, that Jeſus Chriſt, *the righteous, is the propitiation for our ſins*; and that *we are redeemed with the precious blood of Chriſt.*

*Dech.* This ſcheme tends ſtrongly to encourage men in their ſins: for if another man, or a beaſt, may be made to endure the puniſhment of our ſins for us, we need be in no pain about what we do. If the law of conſcience can have any effect, it muſt proceed from a full perſuaſion, in the breaſt of every man, that he himſelf, and not another, is to ſuffer for his own offences. He cannot, I think, entertain any opinion, of more dangerous conſequence to morality, than that all his debts of ſin are already paid; and that the fund of merit, provided for that purpoſe, is ſo infinitely great, as to make it impoſſible for him to exhauſt it, by his utmoſt wickedneſs.

*Shep.* Your objection to Chriſtianity is founded upon your ignorance of it. Chriſt hath, through his blood, made a covenant between God and us, by which we are obliged to forſake our ſins, and keep the commandments of God, on pain of forfeiting all the privileges, to which we are intitled by his death, and by the covenant eſtabliſhed

bliſhed therein. He hath made no atonement for thoſe who perſiſt in their ſins; but as he knows mankind are very corrupt and weak by nature, and, conſequently, unable by their own ſtrength to obſerve the articles of this covenant, he hath, in his holy ordinances, conveyed to us ſuch Divine aſſiſtances, as, if duly concurred with on our part, may ſufficiently help our natural infirmity. As we are ſinful, he hath called us to repentance, and made atonement for us; as we are weak, he hath imparted to us his own ſtrength; and as we are, in ourſelves, unworthy of eternal happineſs, he hath graciouſly imputed his own righteouſneſs to us. Thus hath God, in the diſpenſation of our religion, been pleaſed to deal with us; and nothing can do ſo much honour, either to his juſtice, or mercy.

*Dech.* Pray, Sir, did the blood of Chriſt make a full ſatisfaction, to the juſtice of his Father, for the ſins of the whole human race?

*Shep.* It did.

*Dech.* And all who repent, and believe, are to be ſaved thro' Chriſt?

*Shep.* They are.

*Dech.* It follows, then, that the juſtice of God only is taken into the Chriſtian ſcheme, and his mercy left out; for if a full amends is made for our ſins, we have a right to be ſaved, and do by no means lie at the mercy of God for our ſalvation.

*Shep.* Was it no act of mercy in God to aſſume our nature, and in that nature to undergo the puniſhment of our ſins? Is it no act of mercy in God to beſtow on us a ſaving faith, and by his grace to work in us a true repentance? Will it be no act of his mercy to accept of us, who are unworthy in ourſelves, for the ſake of Chriſt Jeſus, our Redeemer?

*Dech.* In the defence of this amazing ſcheme, you can ſcarcely offer any other arguments, but that God had a right to execute ſuch a ſcheme; and that he was pleaſed to do it. Now I may uſe the ſame way of arguing, and inſiſt that he hath a right to proceed with us in another manner, and accept of repentance, as a ſufficient atonement.

*Shep.* We cannot only prove, Sir, that God had a right to chuſe this ſcheme of redemption, but, likewiſe, that

that he did actually chuſe, and execute it. This, I hope, we ſhall do, to the ſatisfaction of Mr. *Templeton*, in our future conferences; and with it prove, what is neceſſary to it, the divinity of our bleſſed Saviour. As for you, Sir, and the other Deiſts, you cannot, ſurely, ſay, that God can forgive ſins on a mere repentance; becauſe you maintain, that he acts by the eternal law of reaſon and juſtice, and that he is as much obliged, as any man can be, to conform himſelf to that law. If this is the caſe, as governor of the world, and judge of all men, he cannot pardon a delinquent, on his bare repentance: that would be to act againſt the eternal fitneſſes of things, and the indiſpenſable law of nature; which if it dictates any thing, it muſt be this; that the law of God is not given for nothing, nor its penalties inſtituted in vain; that as every offender would repent, rather than be puniſhed, if that alone would ſerve the turn, the law, and its penalties, would be rendered utterly ineffectual; and that therefore impartial and univerſal juſtice muſt be done, in order to the preſervation and happineſs of that boundleſs and important kingdom, over which God is pleaſed to preſide, as an equitable ruler and judge. You may combat this argument, drawn from the juſtice of God, and founded on your own principles, with others deduced from his mercy, as ſtrenuouſly as you can; but all ſuch arguments will only ſerve to involve you in endleſs and inextricable difficulties, from which unaſſiſted reaſon can never ſet you free: it is the Chriſtian ſcheme, alone, that can do this. What other means or expedients, beſide the Chriſtian, God might have made uſe of for the ſatisfaction of his own juſtice, and the manifeſtation of mercy to his fallen creatures, we cannot tell; neither you, nor I, nor the wiſeſt man that ever lived, is able to form the leaſt notion of any other method, ſufficiently qualified to anſwer the end: all other ſchemes we can think of, either ſink the one attribute, to give ſcope to the other; or, as they are both infinitely active, leave them mutually to ſuſpend each other's operations for ever.

*Dech.* That is to ſay, the ſins of men have excited a kind of ſtruggle and combat between the attributes of God.

*Shep.*

*Shep.* No, Sir; it does not ſo much as inſinuate any ſuch thing. The wiſdom of God, and the goodneſs of his Son, immediately upon the unhappy breach made in the kingdom of God by the ſin of man, contrived the bleſſed means to repair it, ſet forth in our holy religion; by which the great difficulty is removed, and mankind taught that ſolution to it, which no created wiſdom was ever able, of itſelf, to find out. The Angels are ſaid, by St. *Peter*, to have had a deſire to look into the myſtery of our redemption; but St. *Paul* ſays, it was hid in God from the beginning of the world; and that the wiſdom of God, manifeſted therein, *was made known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, by the church of Chriſt.* The reaſon of man is altogether unable to fathom ſuch depths, and, when it ſets itſelf to inquire how the juſtice of God can be ſatisfied conſiſtently with his infinite compaſſion, is loſt in an endleſs maze of difficulties, and ſeeming contradictions, which it knows not how to get over. The Angels themſelves were, it ſeems, unequal to this diſcovery, which, now that it is laid open by revelation, even man himſelf can conceive.

*Dech.* By what I can find, this ſcheme of redemption, as you call it, is ſtill a myſtery, too hard for the digeſtion of you Chriſtians. Many of you deny the divinity of Chriſt, on which you found the dignity of his atonement, as, for inſtance, Dr. *Clarke*, &c. yet maintain the doctrine of the atonement: others, who ſeem to be leſs remote from the truth, deny both: ſo that if mankind were, on any occaſion, at a loſs to know how they ſhould be proceeded with, they are ſtill as much in the dark as ever, Chriſtianity affording no certain lights herein, that may be depended on.

*Cunn.* Chriſtianity, rightly underſtood, promiſes forgiveneſs of ſins, and eternal life, only to a true repentance; and thoſe men do but deceive themſelves, who are led, by their own interpretations of Scripture, to depend on foreign or imputed merit, for their ſalvation. Chriſt is called our Saviour, becauſe he ſet us an example, which if we follow, and gave us a law, or rule of action, which if we obſerve, we ſhall ſave ourſelves. Nothing hath hurt Chriſtianity ſo much, and given its adver-

adverſaries ſo great an advantage againſt it, as the endeavour of divines to reconcile the terms of ſalvation, therein propoſed, to a careleſs and ſinful life. The firſt ſtep they made towards this, was by perſuading themſelves, and others, to expect forgiveneſs of their ſins for Chriſt's ſake, and all the bleſſings propoſed in the Goſpel for his righteouſneſs, not their own. Popery went a ſtep farther; and, as if conſcious, that Chriſt's merits were not ſufficient to excuſe the ſins of all mankind, nor intitle them to infinite favours, it added to it the merits of all the Saints, and ſold them to ſuch as were not diſpoſed to acquire merit by any other means than their money. This is the moſt dangerous article of popery, becauſe it ſtrikes more directly, than any other, at the foundation of all morality. As this error was older than popery itſelf, and as our reformers every-where, except a few, conſidered nothing as an error, but what was purely popiſh; they threw out the imputed merits of the Saints, and retained that of Chriſt only; not reflecting, as they ought to have done, that the one is as apt to infuſe expectations hurtful to real religion and virtue, as the other. To make the merits of Chriſt ſufficiently efficacious, they taught, alſo, that Chriſt is God; and ſo clogged the reformation with the Incarnation, the Trinity, and I know not what other unintelligible myſteries: however, there were ſome who went farther, and gave us Chriſtianity as its author left it.

*Shep.* Namely, *Socinus*, and his followers. The church of *England* hath been, to the full, as guilty of this fault you find with the reformation, as any other church, nay, rather more ſo. She ſets forth the doctrine of the Incarnation, the Trinity, and the ſatisfaction made for ſin by the death of Chriſt, moſt expreſly, in her articles; ſhe makes a conſtant uſe of the *Nicene* and *Athanaſian* creeds, in her public ſervice; nay, ſhe does a great deal more than all this; for ſhe mixes thoſe doctrines with her liturgy ſo eſſentially, that it is impoſſible for any body to join in prayer with her, but he muſt call Chriſt, and the Holy Ghoſt, God, and pray to them as ſuch. If Chriſt, and the Holy Ghoſt, be not God, this is rank idolatry; and idolatry is a damnable ſin: yet Mr. *Cunningham* holds two pariſhes by a ſolemn ſubſcription to our articles

repeats

repeats our creeds in public with an audible voice; and offers up his own, and the prayers of a whole congregation, to *God the Son*, and *God the Holy Ghoſt:* he knowingly and wilfully commits what he takes to be idolatry, and a damnable ſin; he encourages others, by his public example, to perſiſt in this crime, which he repreſents, to his own conſcience, as one of the firſt magnitude, and deepeſt dye: but, then, he makes amends for all this, by arguing in private againſt the ſaving merits of Chriſt, and the Trinity: ſuch is the new-faſhioned kind of ſincerity, in which ſome of our modern divines, and all our Deiſts, make the whole of religion to conſiſt.

*Cunn.* This is only railing at me, Sir, and not proving the doctrine of ſatisfaction to be no novelty, or reproach to Chriſtianity.

*Shep.* You ſay, Sir, this error of expecting ſalvation, through the merits of Chriſt, is older than popery?

*Cunn.* I do.

*Shep.* Was is not held by one party, in the time of the *Nicene* council?

*Cunn.* It was.

*Shep.* And did not ſome, among the fathers of the firſt and ſecond century, lean a little to it?

*Cunn.* I believe ſome did.

*Shep.* I am ſure the apoſtles held it, or they could never have uſed ſuch expreſſions as theſe: *Ye are bought with a price. We are redeemed, not with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Chriſt. We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveneſs of ſins. Him hath God ſet forth to be a propitiation for ſins. Chriſt hath ſuffered for ſins, the juſt for the unjuſt. God was in Chriſt reconciling the world to himſelf. Feed the church of God, which he hath purchaſed with his own blood.*

*Dech.* We did not meet to hear you cap texts.

*Shep.* I have only quoted a few, out of innumerable texts that might be cited from the writings of the apoſtles, to ſhew they held the doctrine of the ſatisfaction; and the two laſt ſhew they believed, alſo, in that of our Saviour's divinity. He, too, ſets forth the ſame doctrine: *I will lay down my life for the ſheep.* The ſame was alſo believed all along in the *Jewiſh* church, and gave all the merit to their ſacrifices. *Iſaiah* believed it; for he ſays, *He*

*He was wounded for our tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our iniquities: the chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him, and with his ſtripes we are healed. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.* Nay, he founds his office of interceſſion on his ſatisfaction: *He bore the ſin of many, and made interceſſion for the tranſgreſſors. Job* calls him *his Redeemer*; and he is ſaid to have been *the Lamb ſlain from the foundation of the world.* Thus, Sir, your cenſure of this doctrine includes the church of Chriſt in all ages, the Apoſtles, Chriſt himſelf, and the Prophets: and although, if we believe the Scriptures, it was ſettled between God the Father, and God the Son, at the creation of the world, and, conſequently, muſt have been foreſeen, as predetermined from all eternity; yet you are pleaſed to call it a novelty, and an error. What is ſtill more extraordinary, you ſubſcribed to this error when you were admitted into holy orders: you ſolemnly declared, in the face of the church, your unfeigned aſſent and conſent to it, when you entered upon your firſt living; you repeated that declaration, in order to your enjoying the ſecond; and, I preſume, would do the ſame, after all you have now ſaid, for a third: you daily read the Scriptures, and repeat the creeds, to your people, in which it is ſet forth in the ſtrongeſt terms; nay, and, not ſatisfied with all this, you profeſs it, as often as you perform divine ſervice, in an hundred ſolemn acts of devotion, to God's own face: yet you believe it to be a novelty, an error, a reproach to Chriſtianity, and a provocative to vice and wickedneſs.

*Temp.* Good God!

*Shep.* Yet you believe there is nothing required to make you acceptable, in the ſight of God, but ſincerity.

*Temp.* This ſcene is a little too ſhocking, Mr. *Shepherd*; pray cloſe it.

*Shep.* Let wickedneſs hide its own head, if it can; it is my duty to tear away its cloak: complaiſance is as much out of this queſtion, as when a criminal is condemned for murder. I have already ſhewn, gentlemen, that Deiſm is utterly defective, inaſmuch as it wants an atonement for ſin, truly repented of. A few words will ſuffice, to reconcile the doctrine of ſuch an atonement to reaſon, and take away all objections to it. Our ſins might

might be juſtly puniſhed in our Saviour, ſince he was by no means compelled to ſuffer for them, but did it voluntarily. Beſides, he did not ſuffer, either as being in himſelf a juſt, or guilty perſon; but as undertaking the office of our repreſentative and ſacrifice, and as one who had power, of and in himſelf, to lay down his life, and to take it again. His Father did not, by an arbitrary act, take away his life, or he could not have reaſoned as he did; *Therefore doth my Father love me, becauſe I lay down my life.* Nay, his infinite goodneſs diſcharges mankind of this guilt: *No man taketh it from me; but I lay it down of myſelf.* His righteouſneſs, alſo, might be rewarded in us, and no offence to reaſon; he might transfer it as juſtly, as a man can make a preſent of any good thing he poſſeſſes, or make over, by free gift, his title to an eſtate, to one he loves. In all this there is nothing repugnant to reaſon, but ſomewhat perfectly agreeable to infinite goodneſs. If we conſider the ends propoſed by the ſufferings of our bleſſed Saviour, they were moſt ſuitable to the attributes of God, to the government of the world, and to the wants of man; for they, alone, could at once ſatisfy the juſtice of God, and make us objects of his mercy; they, alone, could demonſtrate to the whole intellectual world, the heinous nature of ſin, and the ſtrictneſs of Divine juſtice; and yet, at the ſame time, preſerve from total deſtruction a ſpecies of rational creatures. I challenge the whole world to aſſign a ſcheme, by which any of theſe important ends can be anſwered, without forgetting the reſt. This now is ſo far from being an encouragement to ſin, that nothing can ſo effectually deter us from it. *If the word ſpoken by Angels*, ſays St. *Paul*, *was ſtedfaſt, and every tranſgreſſion and diſobedience received a juſt recompence of reward; how ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great ſalvation, which at the firſt began to be ſpoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him? If we ſin wilfully, after that we have received the knowlege of the truth, there remaineth no more ſacrifice for ſins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which ſhall devour the adverſaries. He that deſpiſed* Moſes' *law, died without mercy. Of how much ſorer puniſhment, ſuppoſe ye, ſhall he be thought worthy,*

*who*

*who hath trodden under-foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was ſanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done deſpight unto the Spirit of Grace?* Let no *Socinian*, after this, ſay there is little ſtreſs laid in Scripture on the blood of Chriſt; nor no Deiſt, that, becauſe Chriſt hath died for our ſins, we may therefore be in no pain about them: for altho' nothing can be more ſweet than the hope of forgiveneſs, propoſed to us thro' the blood of Chriſt, yet is this a moſt awful comfort, a moſt alarming mercy. If the tendereſt love can win us, or the moſt dreadful denunciation of juſtice can frighten us, to our duty, here are both in perfection; here is ſomething to melt the thinking mind into gratitude, and ſomething to rouſe the ſtupid to a juſt concern for his ways.

*Dech.* Enough, to anſwer both purpoſes, is deducible from the light of nature.

*Shep.* Little or nothing is deducible from thence, if it does not give us a right idea of God, and our duty. Yet, altho' it ſhould, if it does not give us well-grounded hopes of pardon, after tranſgreſſing his law, it will only drive us to the deſpair of devils, to an endleſs progreſs in ſin; but if, by that light, we have hope of forgiveneſs, upon an unlimited repetition of ſinning and repenting, that light is then a temptation and encouragement to ſin, ſufficient to invite over to itſelf, from the ſtrictneſs of Chriſtianity, not only the looſe and ill-diſpoſed, but even thoſe who have the higheſt eſteem for virtue.

*Cunn.* The application of Chriſt's merit, if it were granted, muſt be a thing of great uncertainty: for who can tell whether he is within the terms, on which it is to be expected?

*Shep.* The doubts ariſing from this uncertainty in ſome minds (for they do not affect all) are of unſpeakable uſe to them; beſides, it is better to have even the loweſt hopes of pardon, than to be ſure of condemnation, which is all can be expected from a perfect knowlege of God's will, and a continual tranſgreſſion of it, without the leaſt idea of an atonement. Pray, Mr. *Cunningham*, upon what terms do you expect ſalvation?

*Cunn.*

*Cunn.* Upon my own obedience to the will of God. Do you expect yours upon any other?

*Shep.* Beside my own obedience, which is very imperfect, I hope for salvation thro' the righteousness of Christ. Do you think your obedience is such as to merit heaven, when examined by the law of God, either natural, or revealed?

*Cunn.* If it is not, it is my own fault; for it might be such.

*Shep.* Then you have more to answer for than any other man; for sure I am, no man can be good enough, if left to himself, to merit eternal glory. The Scriptures speak so very often, and so very strongly, in a contrary strain, that I think it needless to quote them. A perfect obedience is, in my mind, too little to merit heaven, as it is all due for being, and the comforts and honours annexed to that being here. But the misery of it is, no man pays, or is able to pay, a perfect obedience to the will of God; so that, upon a fair balance of temporal accounts, every man is a debtor to God. With how ill a grace, then, shall he claim a glorious crown, and an eternal kingdom, for his deserts!

*Temp.* For my part, I disclaim all such pretensions, and hope God will not judge me merely by my obedience, either before or after the most thorough reformation of my life I have any hopes of making.

*Dech.* Have you not enough of Mr. *Shepherd*'s harangues?

*Temp.* I like his reasonings so well, that I am determined to hear him upon the last article of the Deistical creed, which denies all revelation.

*Shep.* Will you be so good, then, Gentlemen, as to finish what is to be done at my turret? for my duty, and my other little affairs, require I should be within call.

*Dech.* Very scrupulous! Well, we will.

*Temp.* Ay, and we will go to church to-morrow; sha'n't we, Mr. *Dechaine?*

*Dech.* We can't tell how we shall be disposed, till to-morrow comes.

6 FE 67

*The End of the Fourth* DIALOGUE.